



Nova Scotia Provincial Council
Catholic Women's League of Canada
2018 Organization Annual Report
Inspired by the Spirit Women Respond to God's Call

REPORTING STATISTICS

The number of councils participating in the annual reporting between our two Diocesan councils was relatively unchanged from last year at around 50% for both councils. As our Diocesan organization chairs relate, it is difficult to generalize the findings of the annual reports to those councils that have not reported. However, the information contained in the reports still provides an important insight into parish council priorities and functioning in relation to the organization standing committee. The minority of councils reporting did not have organization chairs. While this is a concern from the important work of this standing committee, it is positive to have those council presidents and executive members take the time to complete the annual report. It is very likely that the newness of the online annual reports procedure may be one of the factors creating a challenge to have more councils participate. As the process improves in response to the evaluations and council members become more familiar with it, this will become less of a barrier. However, completion of annual reports has always been a struggle at the parish level even when they were written accounts. Strategies that would assist parish councils in setting the completion of annual reports as a priority appear to be an important goal.

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT AND RETAINMENT

By the submitted reports, the average size of parish CWL councils within our province appears to be around 68 members. However, the greatest frequency of council membership from those reporting is around 50 members. This difference may be explained by the number of larger councils reporting and the underrepresentation of our smaller councils that consist of 20 members or less. It is important to acknowledge this lack of presence of the smaller councils as their challenges in leadership development, recruitment and retaining of members may differ from that of larger councils. It is important for provincial and diocesan councils to know and understand the reality of these smaller councils if they are to enact successful supportive strategies.

Meeting attendance still appears to be a challenge for most parish councils in our province. Key events that our members tend to attend are spiritual, social, and fundraising events. Councils appear to be actively engaged in League activities. The lack of attendance at meetings by members, however, means a possible loss of the benefit of members coming together in dialogue for the “work and business” of our organization.

It is difficult to truly ascertain from the annual reporting statistics how many new members were recruited across our province. However, both diocesan chairs speak to the activities taken by the councils in

attracting members into their fold. This includes promotion through parish bulletins, presentations from the altar and displays in parish information and stewardship fairs, social media, and gift memberships. Again, the best approach appears an individualized inviting and embracing approach that encourages women in the parish to come to a meeting or a council celebration dinner, the presentation of new members kits and mentoring. Recruitment is work that can never stop. It takes energy and needs that touch of sincerity and passion for our organization.

Again, because of the low number of councils submitting statistics, it is not possible to determine attrition. Deceased members make up the large number of lost membership numbers. Many councils, however do reach out to those not renewing their membership through personal calls and emails as well as general invitations. Some of the ways those who have stopped or can no longer actively participate in the League are remembered through cards and flowers, parties and helping them attend council social events.

Member recognition was also an important focus for many councils with certificates of merit, anniversary pins and the Maple Leaf Pin being the most popular awards. It was wonderful to note, as well, that three members had their leadership acknowledged through a Bellelle Guerin Award. Public acknowledgement of accomplishments and acts of appreciation such as sending thank you cards to members all help members to feel an active and integral part of their council and our organization. For new members, many of the ways of encouraging them to join are also used to make them feel welcome to their councils. Again, a welcoming approach with good mentorship and involvement in subcommittees and other activities are strategies parish councils use across the province.

Online membership is used by slightly over half of the reporting councils. This is largely unchanged from the last reporting year. Traditional formats for membership fee reminders are still used by most of the councils. This includes phone calls, announcements at Mass as well as other church media such as bulletins and bulletin boards. Email is also used by almost one half of the parishes.

LEADERSHIP

While the greater percentage of councils did not actively take part in League development days, members are attending conventions and workshops. Diocesan council conventions and retreats are the most popular by the reported numbers. It is very positive to note that there was strong attendance at the National convention in Prince Edward Island last year. Members appear to be taking advantage of attending when possible and supports the merit of the National convention moving across provinces with the intent to make it more accessible to members at the parish council level.

Members moving into leadership roles at different levels of the League tend to be largely at the Diocesan and Provincial levels. This trend is logical given the work and representation of these councils. However, while not part of the annual reporting information, through experience I am aware that many executive officer positions for these councils are appointed rather than attained through the League election process. It appears challenging to have members move up into other leadership levels of the League. This is a significant concern.

Around 60% of the councils reporting across the province expressed awareness of the Catholic Women's Leadership Foundation. Given that only half of the councils in our province responded with an annual

report, this statistic is concerning. It is possible that a significant majority of members in our province may not know about this leadership opportunity and are limited in the ability of the foundation to reach all those who would benefit from this leadership opportunity.

LEAGUE RESOURCE MATERIAL

It is reassuring to see that councils have access to the main League resources, including the Constitution and Bylaws as well as the national policy and procedure manual. Councils do avail themselves of the League promotional materials with membership certificates, welcome brochures, service pins and note Mass cards being the most popular items.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Councils used various strategies to complete annual reports and put effort into reporting details by referring to council minutes, reports, and other pertinent documents.

LIFE MEMBERS

Life members served councils as mentors and facilitators for workshops. They also provided guidance to members on issues of concern. It is perhaps of some significance that many parish councils did not perceive to have access to life members or have not used a life member that was in their area.

Despite challenges enacting all aspects of the organization aspects of the League for the councils in Nova Scotia, the general summaries are enlightening and positive to read. They speak to the many and diverse ways members are active in their councils, with a special focus creating and maintaining interest in their councils and supporting their church communities.

In closing, thank you to our two Diocesan chairs, Janice MacDougall, and Sonia Gaul, and all the organization chairs across our province for completing the reports and the ongoing work and support given our organization. It is through these efforts that our organization will be progressive, remaining relevant and spirit-led in its work for God and Canada.

Glenda Carson

Nova Scotia Provincial President-elect and Organization Standing Committee Chair