

Dear Sisters in the League

At the beginning of my term as Legislation Chair in May 2015 I made a commitment to following proposed or implemented legislation in three specific areas: that which is related to current Catholic Women's League resolutions, sanctity of life issues and legislation that either enhances or detracts from our call to be good stewards of God's creation.

The fall of 2015 and the winter thus far have seen significant activity in the legislation area. Catholic Women's League members prayerfully considered their choices for elected representatives in the federal general election in the fall and participated in electing a new majority government and Prime Minister. It was encouraging to hear reports of members and councils asking pointed questions of candidates regarding their positions on issues of interest to members of the League and to all Catholic voters. Your dedication to ensuring that Catholic voices and opinions are heard helps bring us closer to **One Heart, One Voice, One Mission**.

Ontario provincial legislative assembly representatives are studying information related to the harmful effects of microbeads and a bill is being considered. Plastic microbeads and their impact on the environment was the subject of a resolution passed first at the Hamilton diocesan convention in 2015 and then passed at provincial and national levels. This is an example of the influence our organization can have in areas of concern to people across the country.

The approval of the abortion drug RU486, commonly known as the "morning after pill", this past fall was distressing to many. Especially in this jubilee year of mercy, we are called to reach out to those affected by abortion, however caused, with gentleness and kindness. Our Christian duty is not to condemn or judge but to try to understand the anguish that must have accompanied such a decision and offer that anguish to God for healing.

Physician assisted death continues to be a topic of grave concern to members. Directives suggesting possible action members and councils can take have been forwarded to local councils from committee chairs in several areas as this issue will affect all of us, in a variety of ways. Members are encouraged to advocate for all opinions to be considered before legislators change our laws, potentially in such a drastic fashion.

The need for more readily available palliative and hospice care for all Canadians has been announced as the sub-theme of national President Barbara Dowding for 2016. Any discussion of the underlying causes of what appears to be an increase in requests for physician assisted death must include a recognition of historical neglect of adequate, comprehensive, compassionate care of those who are nearing the end of earthly life. Sample letters urging

members of provincial and federal legislative assemblies to improve and ensure access to appropriate palliative and hospice care have been distributed to all councils. As my counterpart on Ontario Provincial Council Carol Richer states, "If ever there was a time for the League to mount an intensive letter writing campaign ... this is it! And don't stop at letters ... call the constituency office, ask to speak to the MP or MPP... leave a message and ask to be called back. Let them know that palliative and hospice care has to be at the top of any political agenda."

Ways in which we are good or not so good stewards of God's creation are making headlines currently and will continue to do so as our country adjusts to temporary and systemic changes to provincial, national and international economies. Methods used to extract, process and deliver natural resources to market are becoming subject to increasing scrutiny. Members are encouraged to study both church and secular documents in order to better understand how we are obligated to care for our environment in a way that facilitates the use of God's gifts to humanity responsibly and equitably.

May God continue to bless you in all you do for God and Canada.

Respectfully submitted,  
Catherine Feren