

My dear Sisters in the League,

In this issue of the Spectrum I will focus my report on legislative activity related to recent Catholic Women's League resolutions passed at the national level. In this time of considerable uncertainty and a prevalent societal attitude of increasing lack of respect for the dignity of all human persons it is more important than ever that members continue to propose resolutions that speak to our Catholic values. It is vital that members also follow up with legislators to ensure our efforts receive appropriate and sustained attention and action.

You are undoubtedly aware that properly and compassionately delivered home care can generally help people stay in their own homes longer while reducing the overall costs of health care as compared to institutional settings. Including insured home care in the Canada Health Act is a first step in providing dignity to our aging and ailing population. National Chairperson of Legislation Nancy Simms is the initiator of a petition through the House of Commons website to support Resolution 2016.05. - Amend the Canada Health Act to Include Home Care as an Insured Health Service. She urges all Catholic Women's League members and their families and friends to sign the electronic petition to draw further attention to the need for adequate health care for our fellow citizens while acknowledging the need for financially sustainable alternatives to hospital and institutional care.

Resolution 2016.04 Amend the Canada Health Act to Identify Palliative Care as an Insured Health Service speaks to the second step in the three pronged approach to God's call to care for our brothers and sisters. The good news is that Bill C-277 - An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada – has passed second reading in the House of Commons and has been referred to committee for further study.

The Honourable Jane Cordy, Senator, spoke in the Senate this past October in support universal delivery of palliative care:

“Honourable senators, Margaret Ann Jacobs, National President of the Catholic Women's League of Canada, recently wrote a letter to Health Minister Jane Philpott. In the letter she asks the government "to identify palliative care as an insured health service covered under the Canada Health Act [and] to develop a national strategy for uniform standards and delivery of palliative care as defined by the World Health Organization." I believe this is a reasonable request by the CWL that would benefit all Canadians.

Hospice palliative care can be provided in places such as a hospital, a residential hospice, at home, or in a long-term care home. We know that most Canadians want

hospice palliative care. Unfortunately, fewer than 30 per cent have access to such care. Honourable senators, hospice palliative care should be accessible to all Canadians, no matter where they live in our great country.”

Although this act is only to “provide for the development of a framework on palliative care” it is indeed an indication that palliative care is important to many Canadians and that yet again, the Catholic Women’s League and its’ members are on the forefront of important government advocacy that is really making a difference.

Bill C-268 - Protection of Freedom of Conscience Act (short name) has passed first reading but appears stalled in the House of Commons. This bill seeks to more specifically protect freedom of conscience rights for health care professionals who do not want to participate directly or indirectly in physician assisted death. The proposed legislation prohibits dismissing or not hiring a person based only on a person’s refusal to take part in that activity. A motion was passed at the 2016 National Convention urging provincial councils “to petition their provincial/territorial premiers and appropriate ministers to request that freedom of conscience of healthcare professionals be protected and to ensure the same protection for healthcare institutions...” Now it becomes a task for all members to speak with government representatives to ensure they are aware of your opinion and to see that this important bill does not get lost in the midst of other topics.

Pope Francis describes the love our Lord has for his ailing and dying children in a most beautiful way:

”The way we experience illness and disability is an index of the love we are ready to offer. The way we face suffering and limitation is the measure of our freedom to give meaning to life’s experiences, even when they strike us as meaningless and unmerited. Let us not be disturbed, then, by these tribulations. We know that in weakness we can become strong and receive the grace to fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body, the Church. For that body, in the image of the risen Lord’s own, keeps its wounds, the mark of a hard struggle, but they are wounds transfigured for ever by love.”

We, as Catholic women, beloved children of God, know that we are called to care for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in the way Jesus taught us, no matter what the law says. And that is such a gift, a gift to be shared!

May God always bless you in all you do for God and Canada.

Respectfully submitted,  
Catherine Feren