

**Nova Scotia Provincial Council  
Catholic Women's League of Canada  
Legislation Annual Report for 2019**

Challenges were found again this year with regards to the online annual reports. Statistics showed that the reports from the Antigonish Diocese have dropped 10% from 13/40 (33%) councils reporting in 2018 to 9/40 (23%) in 2019. The Halifax/Yarmouth Diocese remained at 9/33 (27%) councils reporting in both 2018 and 2019. Both Diocese indicated that approximately 60% of these councils had no Legislation Chairperson. It is encouraging that councils completed the reports and the councils who, with no Legislation Chair, still carried on the work. All of the 9 councils in the Halifax/Yarmouth Diocese who reported, 100% of those in the Legislation Chair, have never held this position previous.

All councils indicated they are aware of who their elected representatives are at the municipal, provincial and federal levels and most receive mailings from these people. Antigonish Diocese rated their knowledge of issues being discussed by these government levels as being very well informed. Approximately 50% of reporting councils indicated they accessed **HANSARD**. Unfortunately, with only 18/73 (25%) of councils reporting, this indicates that  $\frac{3}{4}$  (75%) of our councils in Nova Scotia are not discussing or acting on federal, provincial or municipal issues. The online annual reports asked the councils' awareness of these specific Federal Bills: **Bill C-57**: An Act to Amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act, **Bill C-75**: An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other acts and **Bill C-418**: Protection of Freedom of Conscience Act. Halifax/Yarmouth Councils indicated approximately 70% of them as having "some knowledge" of these 3 bills and 30% of Antigonish Councils had "some knowledge."

In the Antigonish Diocese, councils reported signing petitions for **Bill S-206**: Traditional Parenting and **Bill C-21**: which is a secular law now being applied in Quebec which prevents many government employees from wearing religious symbols. This is not a federal bill but is causing increased controversy and many are calling on the federal government to intervene. Halifax/Yarmouth Diocese acted upon **Bill S-228**: An Act to Amend the Food & Drug Act, **Bill C-14**: Medical Assistance in Dying, **Bill C-243**: An Act Respecting the Development of A National Maternity Assistance Program Strategy and **Bill S-240**: An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration & Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs).

Provincially, each Diocese monitored and/or acted upon different bills that were of interest to them. While both Dioceses were interested in the Boat Harbor Act, the rest were varied from GST Rebates, Affordable Hearing Aids for seniors, pornography, health care, family doctor shortages and reduction in use of single use plastic bags.

Councils have indicated some of their biggest challenges as chairperson of Legislation is not being familiar with the legal and political terms used in the government websites. Many chairpersons were new to this standing committee and had trouble finding the information needed to keep members informed. Other challenges were: not having chairpersons and a lot of repetition within the committees. Members did feel hopeful that the new strategic plan will address this.

As legislation Chair, I tried to keep both Dioceses as up to date as possible on issues in the Government, especially those which impacted our theme **“Care for Our Common Home.”** All communiques sent out by our National Legislation Chair, Betty Colaneri, were forwarded to both Dioceses and the two communiques I wrote were distributed as well. In my fall 2019 communique, I spoke about the HUGS Project, continuing to support **Bill C-262 & Bill C-75**. I also indicated the importance of receiving permission to use the organization name, CWL, when letter writing. **Resolution 2019.02** was adopted at the 2019 National Convention and fell under the Legislation Committee, so action plans were included to support this. My 2<sup>nd</sup> communique zeroed in on 3 bills in the House of Commons: **Bill 152, 153 & 108**. **Bill 152** addresses the Plastic Bag Reduction Act and I asked members to write a thank you note to Sobeys Grocery Stores to let them know we appreciate and applaud their ban on plastic bags in their stores. The other action I addressed was in regards to the online survey from the Federal Government regarding changes to the Canadian Euthanasia Law. Members were encouraged to send letters to the Justice Minister and to support a campaign by the Coalition for the Health Care and Conscience. On their website, [www.canadiansforconscience.ca](http://www.canadiansforconscience.ca), there is a link to tell your MP that you want them to vote to protect the vulnerable. Any letters sent via these links will automatically be sent to the Premier and Leaders of the Opposition.

These last 2 years have been a whirlwind. In my 25 years as a CWL member, I have never chaired legislation at any level or really become involved in it. I was intimidated by it. I have learned a lot in this position and I hope I was able to pass some of this on to you, the members. The term had its challenges. Our numbers are decreased with regards to numbers of councils reporting and councils with no Legislation Chairs.

I would like to thank my Diocesan counterparts, Patty Dorian and Jolene MacLellan, for your reports and doing a wonderful job of keeping your councils up to date on Legislation. I truly believe that with the strategic plan developing, we will again see more members and councils becoming involved and willing to come together and lead “it's members to holiness through service to the people of God.”

**“Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.”**

Mother Teresa

Mary ten Brinke  
NS Provincial Legislation Chairperson  
2018 - 2020