

The Catholic Women's League of Canada  
Saskatchewan Provincial Council  
**Annual Reports 2023**

**CATHOLIC**  
and **LIVING IT!**



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## **Saskatchewan Provincial Council President**

### **Annual Report 2023**

**Connie Crichton**

Saskatchewan consists of three diocesan councils, 110 parish councils, and 4403 members. Although only half of the parish councils reported on the annual survey, the diocesan president's reports, and the Unity Outreach Project visits managed to capture an additional amount of information that allowed us to know our members are restoring their activities that were curtailed by the pandemic.

### **National and Provincial Initiatives**

#### **Walking Together**

In June 2022 our parish councils were challenged with providing their members with an opportunity to learn more about the history of Indigenous people or have an experience that would provide awareness of Indigenous culture. This was to be done to fully enter into the spirit of Truth and Reconciliation and Pope Francis call "Walking Together". Many councils answered this challenge and invited speakers, had blanket exercises, and attended Indigenous cultural days. Our June 2023 convention opening Mass included participation from members of an Indigenous parish and incorporated Indigenous spirituality. Funds were raised by our parish councils and a cheque for \$2,540.00.00 was donated to the Saskatoon Diocesan Indigenous Reconciliation Fund.

#### **Changing to the New Structure**

A workshop was held for all provincial and diocesan executive members to provide them with a greater understanding of how the new structure could work to engage more members to work together on projects that embraced all three pillars of Faith, Service, and Social Justice. The new handbook, for Chairperson's of Faith, Service, and Social Justice (Manual Resource #614) was used in the workshop and it proved to be a very good resource in establishing how the pillars should interact. Presentations have been made to parish councils requesting assistance and this will continue as last of our parish councils move to the new structure. Councils are adapting the change to fit the needs of their council. Both smaller and larger councils are still having challenges in filling executive and leadership positions. This is also true at the provincial and diocesan levels. Current leaders need to be looking out for "the next one" and offer to mentor and encourage those women they identify as having potential leadership abilities.

#### **Unity Outreach Project**

Carrying out the parish visits proved to be a challenge due to weather, travel, and distance. Those visits that were completed proved to be very positive and provided a wealth of information

about what is happening, especially in the rural areas, that goes unrecognized because our members do not make known the work they do in the parishes by answering the surveys. Through the notes taken during the visits, we heard about the dedication to those who are experiencing a loss through providing funeral lunches and honor guards. There is much done to fundraise for their parishes as many are having difficulties with finances. Suppers of many different foods, bake sales, teas, rummage sales just to name a few that were a common trend. Much has been learned and a plan of action will be formulated to address the issues identified as needing attention such as communication, lack of computer skills, and more importantly to validate the work they are doing is amazing. They spoke, we listened and now we act.

### **Parish Council Policy and Procedures Manuals**

Our provincial past president encouraged our parish councils to prepare a policy and procedures manual for their councils. A display of completed manuals was available at the provincial convention in June and a virtual workshop was held in the fall with several councils to assist them in their preparation.

### **Membership, Promotion and Recognition**

Attracting new members is a goal that all councils share. Membership teas and luncheon, speaking at Masses, parish bulletin announcements and personal contact through phone calls, information tables in welcome areas after Masses are the many ways the councils use to attract new members. The parish priests are very important in reaching potential members by speaking at Masses. The Share the Words (52 Reasons to talk about the CWL) resource has been used in many parish bulletins to promote CWL as well as using the map on parish bulletin boards. CWL Sundays are also used to promote the league. Some do it once a year and some do it monthly. Members provide all the ministries at the Mass, wear their scarves or stoles, and have a table set up with information about the League and are available to answer questions. One council designed a pamphlet with information about their council using the brochure in the “Intergenerational Activities Program” - #634 in the manuals resource as a guide. One regional committee hosted a Misconceptions Workshop (#830) that provided the members with ways they could promote the League in a positive way.

Social activities are recognized as an important way to keep members engaged. Christmas parties, end of year parties, and celebrations for the Feast day of Our Lady of Good Council have been used to bring their members together. Acknowledging birthdays with cards and singing was also mentioned by several councils. The rock painting activity was also used as an opportunity to share the sisterhood. Many councils are attracting new members and find that those that take part in the activities of the council, bring new life and ideas.

Challenges with membership were stated by most councils and the most common were that the council members were aging, members were not active, and reluctance of members to take on leadership and executive positions. Splitting up duties of a position has been useful for some

councils. Having meetings to accommodate working women and those who don't like to go out at night is managed by one council by rotating the times of the meetings.

Recognition is recognized as an important aspect of membership. Many councils hold special events to hand out milestone pins. One council has awards for "Outstanding Members" in various categories.

## **Communication**

While email was identified as the primary method of communication, there are still many members who do not use computers so those members rely on phone calls and church bulletin announcements to keep apprized of CWL events. Newsletters are used by many of the councils to keep their members informed who do not attend regular meetings. The provincial council has produced quarterly newsletters combining messages from all positions. This practice has been well received and will continue to be used as our means of communication with parish councils.

The national website is being used by some of the executive members of the councils but they feel other members are not accessing the website. Those that have used the national website regularly are aware of the addition of many more resources. The use of the social media, primarily Facebook and websites, to promote activities was used by over half of the reporting councils. Some councils have sent in submissions to Spotlight and the national Facebook page. One council uses a group messenger chat to reach out to its members. Only five of the reporting councils have accessed catholicwomenunite.ca.

## **Faith**

Responses to "What forms of prayer and spirituality did your council try this year?" provided many ways that councils were meeting the spiritual growth of their members. Saying the rosary, attending Mass, and Adoration were mentioned often. Resources from the National website were also mentioned: Litany of Our Lady of Good Counsel (#716), 8 Candles, (#700) Prayer Service for a Deceased Member (#727), as well a Works of Mercy Prayer Service from the Toolkit for Service (#637). Acknowledging deceased members with honour guards and prayer services is very important to our councils and with our aging membership, is becoming a frequent happening.

One council had an 8-week virtual Lenten using Fr. Ron Rollheiser's book on "Prayer: Our Deepest Longing". Another council studied Ignatian Contemplative Prayer and another watched season one of "The Chosen" and had discussions after each episode. Saskatoon Diocesan council sponsored a presentation on "The Feminine Genius"

World Day of Prayer is again being organized and attended after a break during the pandemic. Spiritual Motherhood of Priests is being promoted to members who may want to make a

commitment to spiritually adopt a priest. Vocations are being supported by some councils through contributions to the seminarian funds.

Sanctity of Life is widely promoted through Pro-Life membership. The provincial president and other CWL members attended the Pro-Life March for Life in Regina and the president was one of the speakers outside the legislative building. Pregnancy crisis centres are supported by our councils as we recognize they provide a real choice for life for women experiencing a crisis pregnancy. Most responding councils participated in 12 hours of Prayer for Palliative Care.

Our youth is being supported by assisting in sacramental preparation, vacation bible school, providing scholarships and bursaries, and supporting the Greater Catholic School Foundation. One council provided financial assistance to two of their parish youth to attend World Youth Day in Portugal.

## **Service**

Many fundraising activities were reported that provided donations to voluntary funds, parish needs and needs within the community. One project promoted by the Saskatoon Diocese was making donations to IWIN (I am Worth It Now), a group in Calgary, who provide backpacks to organizations supporting those who are trying to escape from human trafficking. A Saskatoon organization “Hope Restored” was the beneficiary of dozens of back packs to provide to their clients.

Helping new immigrants was a project undertaken by several councils. Assisting at the CWL Clothing Depot in Saskatoon and the Thrift Store in Prince Albert kept many members busy in those areas. Collections for food, towels, socks, and personal hygiene products were made by several councils. Members offer rides to Mass, appointments and meetings, visit those in Long term Care homes and volunteer at soup kitchens. Councils also fundraised to supplement their membership fees and one council raised funds to pay registration for all of their members to attend the National CWL convention to be held in Saskatoon in August. Another council conducted a “Spread the Joy” raffle that provided a weekly lucky winner with flowers.

## **Social Justice**

Several of the councils have had speakers on mental health and others indicated they plan to do so in the near future. The Horizon’s of Hope workshop was provided and attended by many council members. Councils had other speakers on palliative care. Members from all three diocese attended the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) convention where there were speakers on mental health ministry, suicide prevention and crisis intervention, and also Compassionate care. Four of our members took part in a dialogue with two bishops and several other catholic groups on MAID and end of life care.

Care of the environment was promoted by speakers as well as the actions: reduce, reuse, and recycle were reinforced with members answering the call by reducing the use of disposables, carpooling, and donating their unused items to the CWL Clothing Depot or the Thrift Store.

One council has devoted much time to education on human trafficking and was successful in having the City of Saskatoon declare February 22, Human Trafficking Awareness day. This involved a flag raising at city hall and speeches from the mayor, police chief and the local Bishop.

Members have signed petitions, sent postcards and written letters relating to the expansion of MAID, Conscience Rights for Health Care Workers,

I conclude by giving thanks for the wonderful sisterhood that has dedicated their time and talents to achieve so much in making a difference in our parishes, our communities, and our country. A special thank you to all our Spiritual Advisors who support and guide us in our work. We are blessed by your ministry.



## **Prince Albert Diocesan Council President**

### **Annual Report 2023**

**Priscilla Wakelin/Shirley Lamoureux**

In 2023 the Prince Albert Diocesan CWL was made up of 18 councils. Membership remained about 723 members.

We had a full executive on the Diocesan Council with our President, Priscilla Wakelin leading us, as well as Secretary, Treasurer and 3 chairs of the National Standing Committees.

The Parish Council annual report to National CWL had again less than 50% response with 8 councils responding and completing the reports, Our numbers continue to decline with the closing of one parish and possibility of two more in the near future.

#### **New National Structure:**

Half the councils reporting had a presentation on the new National structure. Most councils (67%) have adopted and have adjusted to the new National structure by filling the required positions on council with 33% still using the old structure with one council starting in 2024; most agreeing that the reasons for not adopting the new structure is due to lack of members to take the convenorship positions. The process will be gradual.

We took an active part in the Unity Project with only 3 parishes not visited. I found this a very positive project and look forward to the results of the project and where it will take us in the future of CWL.

#### **Council Activities:**

One council had a mother-daughter learn to speak on awareness of Indigenous history and residential schools; reviewing the Truth and Reconciliation and contributed funds to Truth and Reconciliation. One council worked on the core values focusing on faith, service and social justice. Regional workshops were held with the theme "the joys and sorrows of aging" based on the words of Pope John Paul II. Another council began working on the Policy and Procedures manual. Some fun things were games and fun for CWL members and the Christmas tea was for all ladies in the church. One very unique activity by one parish was an afternoon for a kindness project of painting open to the community which the children found exciting. It was a big success. At Sacred Heart Cathedral in Prince Albert the Thrift Shop is an ongoing weekly commitment. They make and sell Spring Rolls to offset the increase in fees for their members. They implemented "the Spiritual Adoption of Priests"; catered to the Provincial Convention of the Knights of Columbus; and continue to do funeral lunches. All Spiritual Advisors took part in the activities.

### **Membership Campaigns:**

Seven councils reporting that they do have an annual membership campaign either through the church bulletin; inviting ladies in the parish to join in the social activities; having a membership table at the annual craft fair; doing presentations at the Celebration of our Lady of Good Counsel; handing out pamphlets after mass; giving testimonials of members after mass about the value in being a CWL member. All are encouraged to invite prospective members.

### **Promotion of the League:**

One council has been putting the Share the Words; 52 Reasons to Share the CWL in the parish bulletin one a week for the year. All parish women are invited to the Social activities of CWL All councils promote the league through their actions within the church.

### **Membership Retention:**

Meetings are kept to enable all members to take part; either through the business part (generally done at the start of the meetings) the faith part and the social part. All members receive the minutes regardless of attendance at the meetings and are actively contacted for every activity and event we do in the church or community; fundraising to offset the increase in annual fees; subsidizing members to assist with fee increases.

### **Membership Challenges:**

The main challenge all councils reported was the ability or lack of ability to recruit new members especially the younger ladies in the church. A lot of the current members are aging and most are either unable or feel they are too old to take on leadership roles.

Most councils keep the membership up to date with special events and only half send out cards and letters informing the members of special events and activities. Most councils use email as the primary method of communicating to members the resources at other levels; some only make mention at meetings; texting. \phone calls to give information is now less than half.

Half use Facebook to promote events or websites. The national website is used by councils to keep themselves informed of what National is doing and where and when National events are taking place. It is used as a resource when working on projects.

Only **1** council uses the catholicwomenunite.ca

### **Annual Donations:**

Catholic Missions in Canada: \$800 (8 councils donating)  
Catholic Near East Welfare Association - \$800 (8 councils)  
Coady Int'l - \$250 (8 councils)  
Development and Peace - \$550 (8 councils)

The treasurers are adapting to doing on-line banking but some still prefer to bank in person. It is changing.

### **Past President:**

Duties included Chairing meetings in the absence of the President; taking care of the Council archives with only 5 reported working on the archives in the past year and none sharing their history book with the National office.

Half the Councils are actively sharing amendments to the Constitution and most councils update their P&P manuals every 2 years but a reminder would be helpful.

### **Prayer Life:**

Councils use a variety of prayer styles at their meetings and provided spiritual programs using the websites strategic planning page. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is used; most councils have used the webinars for shared use and had spiritual retreats within the parish. All councils assist members in their growth in the Catholic faith by sharing information from all websites and sources and resources; having guest speakers at meetings; half reported they contribute to seminary fund and consecrated life. All donate to pro-life causes. All wrote letters to the government against abortion and/or medical assistance in dying.

### **Catholic Education:**

Teaching religion after school and sacramental prep; working together as a community between school and church.

### **Palliative Care:**

All reported taking part and providing workshops on the issues surrounding Palliative Care. A 2- day course was provided by the Diocese on Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit for Catholic Parishes on Palliative Care attended by several councils.

### **Refugees:**

Fundraising and assistance in settling in given to a family in Rosthern; other councils assist in donating needed clothing and fundraising.

**Federal and Provincial Bills responses:**

Petitions and letters to the PM, Minister of Agriculture, members of Parliament on issues of pornography, food loss and waste, assisted suicide, human rights, social justice, human trafficking, opposition to MAID. Most councils reported being interested or able to work on resolutions at this time.

**Unity Project:**

We were well received at 14 councils during the Unity Project. It was wonderful to visit old friends and to talk about what they felt was needed in their council.

**Communication Satisfaction:**

National: 75% were usually satisfied  
Provincial - Half were satisfied  
Diocesan - 50%

**Council Structure:**

63% or 5 councils are transitioned to the new structure.  
The President in 60% of councils reporting is appointed and 3 elected The Secretary in 80% of councils reporting is appointed and 20% elected  
The Treasurer in 60% of councils reporting is appointed and 20% elected and 20% unfilled  
Spiritual Development is 40% appointed and 40% elected and 20% unfilled  
Organization - Vacant 80% and elected 20%  
Christian family life - 3 councils have not filled this position; 1 elects and I appoints  
Community life- 60% vacant ad 40% filled  
Education and health -60% vacant 20% elect and 20% appoint Communications - 60% vacant; 40% appoint  
Resolutions - 80% vacant; 20% appoint  
Legislation - 80% vacant; 20% appoint  
Under the new Structure most councils reporting and that have completed the transition from the old structure have a President, Vice. Secretary, Treasurer and 3 conveners that were all volunteers into the positions.

**Age of Members:**

Half the councils have no members under the age of 35 with 2 councils having 4% under the age of 35 and one council has 2 members under 35.

The general concerns seems to be around the issue of the any communications received via email from National that is sent out and then the same thing from Provincial and Diocesan. Some find electronic communication not valuable at all but receive nothing otherwise

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## **Regina Diocesan Council President**

### **Annual Report 2023**

**Janette Rieger**

January 2023 started with 62 councils from the previous year, and 2023 ended with 54 councils.

Several councils disbanded during the year including:

Esterhazy region (now Morning Star region): St. Mary, Churchbridge;

Estevan region: Sacred Heart, Benson;

Regina region: Christ the King, St. Anne, St. Mary; (Since St. Mary has not submitted fees since 2020, they are considered closed by the National Office.)

Southwest region: Holy Family, Admiral;

Weyburn region: Holy Angels, Pangman, and Holy Family, Radville.

The Regina Diocese now has 8 regions. The presidents of the councils in the regions of Esterhazy and Yorkton/Melville met in spring and decided to merge their regions under the name of Morning Star Region. This was approved at a Diocesan Executive meeting on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The chairpersons of each region represent the councils of their region at diocesan executive meetings. Unfortunately, 3 of the regions do not have a chairperson, so that means that the 23 councils in those regions do have representation at the diocesan meetings. In other words, almost 43% of the councils are not represented.

At the end of 2023, the Diocesan Council was made-up as follows:

Past-President – vacant

President – Janette Rieger

Organization/Vice-Pres. – Linda Maddaford

Secretary – Claire Verret

Treasurer – Viola Joel

Faith – Agnes Smith

Service – Cookie Jacques

Service – Lynda Thul

Social Justice – Yvonne Jalbert

The positions of Corresponding Secretary, Communications, Resolutions, and Legislation were vacant. Therefore, we designated our remaining chairpersons to cover the areas of Faith, Service, and Social Justice because the communiques from national began coming under this format commencing after the August 2023 national election. Yvonne Bachelu resigned from the position of past-president due to personal reasons in February of 2023. We thank her for her years of service and her many contributions to the League over the years.

The regions were made-up as follows:

Estevan – vacant  
Moose Jaw – Lynda Thul  
Morning Star – Elaine Hornung  
Our Lady of Good Counsel – Judie Williams  
Our Lady of Peace – vacant  
Southwest – Rachelle Johnson  
Regina – vacant  
Weyburn – Camille Goski

**The following annual report was written by Janette Rieger, President with assistance from Linda Maddaford, Vice-President, with information taken from the National Annual Survey:**

**President:**

In the Regina Diocese, 24 of the 54 councils completed an online Annual Report Survey which is almost a 43% completion rate. There was at least one council in every region who submitted a report. Nearly two-thirds of the councils have embraced the new structure of the League and of those, most have embraced the new structure. Those councils who haven't adopted it are aware of it and either reviewing it or planning to work on it in the coming year. Most of the councils have not had a presentation on the new structure. Many of the councils that answered the survey had the Unity Outreach Project presented to their council. While most appreciate the effort there was little comment as to how this impacted their council. Almost all of the responding councils held projects or events in their council. Most councils involve their Spiritual Advisor in their activities.

**Vice-President:**

Councils continue to hold annual membership drives, give short talks after Mass, make personal phone calls to renew membership. We promote the League by sending newsletters, celebrating the Feast Day of Our Lady of Good Council, wearing our sashes for ministries at a monthly Mass, annual Installation/Reaffirmation of Officers, and events open to all ladies and members of the parish. We employ a variety of activities and events through the year to welcome non-members and provide opportunities to share our enthusiasm for the League.

Members make good use of the National website although rural parishes still struggle with lack of bandwidth and lack of internet/email access. Our greatest challenge is our aging membership base, fewer young people attending church, and fewer numbers of potential members overall, especially in rural areas.

**Secretary and Communications:**

Secretaries do keep their members up to date but only half are responsible for sending out cards or letters, or perhaps cards and letters are not sent at all as the question is vague. Most communication is done by word-of-mouth, meetings, email, and telephone. Facebook and website are the most

popular means of social media, when it is used. Many councils refer to the national website for current information and resources. Only 2 councils used the catholicwomenunite.ca website. Just over half of the councils prepare a member newsletter. The duties of the secretary are shared by many people in a lot of the councils as they indicated that the new duties of the secretary are too much for one person.

### **Treasurer:**

Monies were donated to the various National Voluntary Funds, with the total to all charities totalling \$54,175.00 by the reporting councils.

### **Past-President:**

Many past-presidents are not active or present except for the few cases where they are the acting-presidents. When they are available to the council, most are used as archivists and as advisors to the president. Only half of the councils update their archives and none have shared their history book with the National Office. Many councils make their archived materials available. While half of the councils are aware of the changes to the C&B, very few update their P&P manuals.

### **Faith:**

Councils assisted members in their communal and personal prayer life by using a variety of prayer styles, retreats, reflection days, online, and promotion of daily mass readings. Promotion of daily mass and rosary is the most common form of prayers. The national website was used for #830 Misconceptions Workshop, the Welcome Program, and prayer services. Most councils assisted members in their faith by sharing information of Catholic resources and informing members about Catholic websites. Most councils who participated in ecumenical or interfaith activities participated in the World Day of Prayer. There is little support to promote vocations but a few councils did donate to a seminary fund and through donations and prayer to consecrated women. Most councils donated to pro-life causes and events, and the 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative care in their advocacy for sanctity of life.

### **Service:**

Catholic education is promoted by the gifting of books and bibles for students, scholarships, and support of the Children's Liturgy and Sacramental Preparation programs. A few councils had speakers come in to speak on mental health, and homelessness. Another few councils attending the Horizons of Hope webinar and the CHAS convention, but response to this question was minimal. Activities or speakers on the environment, or women's health issues are minimal. At this time, the councils that responded are probably doing the most work regarding immigrants and refugees.

### **Social Justice (including Resolution and Legislation):**

Only a few councils replied to federal and provincial bills being monitored, and those that did are mostly following MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying), the rights of conscience of medical professionals, and the abortion bill regarding sex selection. One council is working on the resolution on Food Loss & Waste. Many councils are involved in the postcard campaigns to politicians and in petitions. A few councils are involved in letter writing campaigns. Most councils



are not using any resources to remain informed on current federal and provincial legislation, but a few are using mailings from government representatives. Only one council learned about a resolution and that is the one of Combating Textile Waste in Canada. No action was taken but it was discussed and they are planning on following up on this issue. Most councils do not use any resources from the national website as they are not interested in the development of resolutions. The majority of councils will not likely participate in virtual resolutions education due to lack of interest and challenges with online technology.

### **Multi-Year Survey Questions:**

Only 3 councils held a spiritual retreat in 2023. Of the 24 responding councils, only about 74 members took a lead role in planning, organizing or hosting an event or project in the council.

The majority of councils are ‘always’ or ‘usually’ satisfied with communication that they receive from the upper levels of the League.

Half of the councils have transitioned to the new structure of the League. The majority of the executive positions on councils are filled by appointment, if they are able to be filled at all. The only elections are usually for president and vice-president.

Some councils contacted a member of the government in some manner – with a few responses for each method of: in-person, by phone, by letter, by email.

Twelve councils responded that they do not have one member under the age of 35. Other councils have a small percentage of their membership being under the age of 35.

Almost half of the councils reach out to a member at the diocesan level at least twice a year, with a third reaching out annually, and the remainder one-quarter reaching out monthly. None of the councils reach out weekly but they all reported reaching out to the diocesan level at some point. The majority of these councils do not reach out to the provincial or national level, or the national office at all.

### **Summary:**

- Many councils are small and the CWL members are doing what they can. Many members are also very active in their parish so not all of their attention can go to the League.
- Many councils and members are involved in projects in their parish which are not reflected in the survey.
- Many members, even in large councils, do not attend meetings.
- There is too much put on the president of the councils to do the printing of ‘everything and anything that we feel is appropriate for our council’.
- The members are aging, resulting in many members being inactive.
- December is a busy time of year to be doing the annual report; January would be preferred.
- A few of the questions do not allow for the possibility of there being ‘no answer’ or ‘not applicable’. This could perhaps skew some results. Many questions are vague or open to interpretation.
- National needs to provide a longer timeframe for any communications that need to go out to members because many members do not have email access.



## Saskatoon Diocesan Council President

### Annual Report 2023

#### Marion Laroque

The response rate for the annual report survey was slightly better than last year with 25 councils (68%) completing the survey despite the earlier due date. It is interesting that while the number of councils participating was basically the same, we heard from some different councils this year.

#### Presidents

A CWL council that is active and informed of the position and priorities of the League is goal and task of the president. Councils have embraced the new executive structure. All reporting councils have either changed already, are in the process or are aware of the change. At the same time, not all positions are filled. All councils had a secretary and treasurer, but over half did not have a vice-president. One council did not currently have a president. The other position that was consistently not filled was the Social Justice Committee Chairperson.

Councils were asked if they had a specific project or activity in 2023. Wow, they sure did! Naturally, supporting their parish with both events and financially was the most frequently reported activity. In descending order, other events included Truth and Reconciliation awareness, collections for the CWL Clothing Depot, Pro-Life activities, Human Trafficking Awareness and ecumenical events.

While every event reported was read and noted, in the interest of space a few are highlighted here. One council held an evening for the ladies of their parish called *Appre-SHE-ation*. One council worked very hard to raise awareness of the blight on society that is Human Trafficking. On probably the coldest day of the year, a flag was raised at Saskatoon City Hall to recognize Human Trafficking Awareness Day as proclaimed by city council. Another council had a Pilgrim Mother project whereby a statue of the Blessed Mother travelled to member's homes for a two-week period, accompanied by specific prayers. This engaged members who can no longer participate in other activities. Finally, one rural council had a project titled Spread the Joy. For a fee, community members could nominate someone to receive a flower arraignment to brighten their day. A weekly draw determined the lucky person for that week.

#### Vice-Presidents

It is the expectation that the vice-president will assist her president and step into the president position at the end of her term. It is dismaying that well over half of the reporting councils do not have a vice-president. This includes the Saskatoon Diocesan executive council which also does not currently have a vice-president.

#### Membership Recruitment

The vitality of the League depends on membership recruitment and equally as important, maintaining the members that we do have. Almost all councils have some sort of annual membership drive and many considered this year's efforts successful. All councils encouraged

their members to invite prospective members to join the sisterhood that is the League. Advertising the membership drive at mass, membership events, sending emails and making phone calls were some of the methods used to get the word out. One council sent a reminder note and an addressed, stamped envelope to members who had not renewed. All successful membership drives included personal contact, which was encouraged.

The greatest challenge with membership for the majority of councils was recruiting younger women. A very small number of councils have any members under the age of 35. It was also reported that members are reluctant to take on executive or volunteer positions, however, without an executive, councils simply cannot function. An average of three non-executive members took on a lead role in an event this past year. Poor attendance at meetings was also a concern.

Phoning trees, having fun, and building a sense of community were all cited as ways to maintain membership. Facebook was used by over half of the reporting councils to communicate with members. One council formed Companionship Teams to encourage members to get to know one another better. Another council conducted a survey in March asking women who were not yet members what would entice them to join. [Catholicwomenunite.ca](http://Catholicwomenunite.ca), the League's marketing tool, was used by very few councils to attract to members.

The Saskatoon Diocesan executive council supported the membership drives by printing recruitment resources which were made available to councils. A pull-up banner was also made for councils to use with their displays at mass. A discussion on how to recruit and maintain membership was held during the fall Saskatoon Diocesan executive meeting.

### **Secretaries**

In addition to the obvious job of recording the meeting minutes, our secretaries are tasked with council communications. Almost all councils communicate via email with telephoning also used by half of the reporting councils. Our secretaries were responsible for keeping the members up-to-date on special events. Less than one third of the councils had a newsletter. Interestingly, only one third of the secretaries send out cards and letters for significant life events, that task was left to others. Councils were satisfied with the communications received from all levels of the League; however, some councils felt the amount of information they are receiving from national is a bit overwhelming.

One secretary noted that the position is very rewarding. Another brave member took on the challenge of being secretary to improve her English and provided her council with technical assistance, an area in which she has experience.

### **Treasurers**

Our councils were very generous in 2023, reporting a combined 28% increase in total donations from the previous year. This may reflect the return to all fund-raising activities with the lifting of health restrictions. The total donation sum was \$76,971. One council was able to donate \$12,830 to various charities. The average council donation was \$3,229. Nearly all reporting

councils supported the national voluntary fund charities in 2023. What a difference those funds make locally, nationally and internationally.

Some treasurers commented that they would like a template to use for financial reporting. This may be an area of need that could be explored in the future.

### **Past Presidents**

Our past presidents have two roles: to serve as a consultant for the council and to maintain the council history and archives. They reported a wide variety of instances when they were consulted, including for fund raising, funeral honour guard protocol, the election process, creating agendas and bulletin announcements. Some councils do not have a past president and so are missing this valuable advice. Of concern, one council reported that they do not have either a president or past president available to chair meetings.

In their compacity as consultant, past presidents are responsible for the council's policy and procedure manual. One third of the councils have updated their policy manual in the past two years. Councils reached out for advice to the diocesan level most often, followed by the provincial level and then the national level.

Most past presidents updated their councils' archives in 2023. They also made the archived material available for the members to see. It's fun to look back, reminisce and celebrate successes. None of the councils shared a copy of their history book with the national office, and in fact, some wondered why they would.

### **Faith Standing Committee**

The Faith Standing Committee is vital to who we are as an organization of Catholic women. In fact, our first League object is 'to achieve individual and collective spiritual development.'

### **Promotion of Spiritual Growth**

When asked what new forms of prayer and spirituality they used, our chairpersons listed an impressive 42 different prayers, websites, resources and activities for a wide variety of sources. Almost all the councils shared information from Catholic sources. Praying the rosary and other Marian devotions were most frequently cited along with Remembrance of Deceased Members. Some councils also scheduled a speaker on a religious topic. One third encouraged participation in a book club on religious topics. Very few councils held spiritual retreats of at least two hours. CWL national website resources used included:

#700 8 Candles – Lighting Prayers for Peace,

#716 Litany of Our lady of Good Counsel,

#727 Prayer Service for a Deceased Member, and

Works of Mercy Prayer Service from the Service Toolkit.

### **Uphold the Sanctity of Life**

Our members are active in the issue of the protection of life from conception to natural death. Almost three quarters of reporting councils donated to pro-life causes. They also promoted the cause by writing letters to the government on abortion, and Medical Assistance in Dying

(MAiD). Other sanctity of life activities included prayers, the Spiritual Adoption of an Unborn Baby, and Saskatoon Pregnancy Options baby showers. Many councils also participated in the *12 hours of Prayer for Palliative Care*.

### **Foster Vocations**

Several councils donated to a seminary fund. Four councils invited a guest speaker on the role of women in the church, and two councils invited a guest speaker on vocations to ordained ministry and consecrated life.

### **Ecumenism**

Half of the reporting councils participated in the World Day of Prayer, either by attending a service, organizing one, or viewing the service online. One council sponsored a speaker and invited ladies from other churches to attend. Christmas hampers was another joint project with other denominations.

### **Service Standing Committee**

CWL members are called to witness to the love of God through ministry and service (our Mission Statement). The Service Standing Committee encompasses several areas that had been separated into other standing committees.

### **Health**

Health is such a broad area. The survey focused on three areas of particular concern for the CWL members.

#### 1. Mental Health

Several councils reported events to raise the awareness of the issue of mental health for both their members and community. One council had a Canadian Health employee speak on the topic of loneliness. Another council invited a guest speaker who shared his journey through his gay son's suicide. One council participated in a Walk for Mental Health. A pro-active project for one council aimed to brighten someone's day by encouraging members to nominate a woman in their parish to receive a bouquet of flowers to acknowledge her, and let her know the CWL members were praying for her.

#### 2. Palliative Care

Several councils have attended a *Horizons of Hope: A Toolkit about Palliative Care for Catholic Parishes* four module program. Some councils also had other speakers on the subject of palliative care. Councils also participated in the League's *12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care*.

Financial support was given to both the Palliative Care Unit and the Glengarda Hospice in Saskatoon.

#### 3. Women's Health Issues

All the councils who focused on women's health invited speakers to their meetings. The speaker topics included Brain Health, Saskatoon Pregnancy Options Centre and a First Nations Halfway House. Financial support was also given to Saskatoon Pregnancy Options Centre.

### **Support Services for Vulnerable People**

Support for vulnerable people can take on many areas and the survey focused on our work with immigrants and refugees. In addition, several councils mentioned their work in the area of Human Trafficking.

For almost 60 years the Saskatoon Clothing Depot, located in a core area neighbourhood, has provided low-cost clothing, linens and small household items to anyone in need, including our immigrant families. Last year 338 families received free items organized by the Clothing Depot staff. The Clothing Depot is a project that brings together both our urban and our rural councils to jointly combat poverty.

Other projects reported that support immigrants and refugees were involvement in the parish refugee committees, food for hampers, and transportation to appointments, school and mass.

### **Catholic Education**

Our members were active in imparting our faith to younger generations by teaching catechism, leading Childrens' Liturgy, and sacramental preparation. Two councils were also involved in Vacation Bible School. Another council had an essay contest on Human Trafficking.

Support for scholastic endeavors included scholarships, bursaries and donations to local schools. Our councils also reached out to the youth in the parish to involve them in volunteer opportunities. One council worked with their parish Youth Ministry to plan fun activities.

### **Social Justice Standing Committee**

The Catholic Women's League of Canada has a long history of speaking up on issues that effect our members or contradict Catholic social teaching.

This past year two subjects dominated councils' efforts: Human Trafficking and MAiD.

### **Human Trafficking Awareness**

Pope Francis has called Human Trafficking a crime against humanity. Councils' efforts to bring awareness to this issue and support survivors included financially supporting Hope Restored Canada, an organization that works with people who have been sexually exploited and trafficked. The IWIN backpack program was also financially supported. Speakers on the subject were invited to meetings and one council facilitated the *Working Towards Freedom* Study on Human Trafficking in their parish. February 22 was declared Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Saskatoon due to the successful efforts of one council and a flag was raised at City Hall on probably the coldest day of the winter. These efforts were recognized at the Bishop's Breakfast in June. A letter to the Saskatchewan Justice Minister requesting that February 22, 2024 be declared Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Saskatchewan was sent in September and tentative approval was given.

### **Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD)**

MAiD and particularly the proposed expansion to include mentally ill persons, dominated the postcard, letter writing and petition campaigns. Awareness of the need for well-funded palliative care was the other activity mentioned by many councils.

### **Care for the Environment**

The environmental focus for most councils centered on waste reduction, in particular avoiding the use of disposable plates and cutlery. Three councils focused on Resolution 2201.01 *Enact Federal Legislation to Reduce Food Loss and Waste*. One council connected with a local pollinator garden specialist.

In addition to these areas of concern for Social Justice, committees reported monitoring a total of thirteen different federal and provincial bills in 2023. Two councils contacted municipal government in person and one council visited their federal representative in person.

While there were many Social Justice committee activities reported, only just over half of the reporting councils had the chairperson position filled. Half of the councils were either not aware or not interested in the development of resolutions. At the same time, half of the councils said it was likely or somewhat likely that they would attend a virtual resolution educational presentation.

### **Final Comments**

It is always interesting to read the annual report summaries. Our councils are doing such good work, despite the limitations of the members. It is very concerning though that many executive positions go unfilled and younger women do not see the CWL as a place where they belong. This trend needs to change if we are to go forward to serve the people of God, promoting our Catholic values and bringing Jesus to our hurting world.

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## Saskatchewan Provincial Council Treasurer

### Annual Report 2023

Patricia Keefe

In 2023, there were 55 Saskatchewan Councils who donated to the National Voluntary Funds. The donations include:

Catholic Missions in Canada - \$ 4,540

Catholic Near East Welfare Association - \$940

Coady International Institute - \$ 1,898

Development & Peace – Caritas Canada - \$5,042

In total, all Councils gave **\$144.865** to all the various charities they support, including many local causes which aren't necessarily charities.

Many Councils give donations once a year, allowing them the freedom to donate to other causes if the need arises. Some of the treasurers are experienced bookkeepers who use a spreadsheet, and use on-line banking. Some have no bookkeeping experience and would like to see National provide a template for them to use for a general ledger, account register and for reporting purposes. There was an article published in The Canadian League Magazine when Shari Guinta was the National Secretary-Treasurer which had excellent, practical guidance for Treasurers. It would be helpful to have this information published yearly, so old and new members can be more attentive to the financial aspects of their councils.

The treasurer is a very important position on the CWL Council. Their records will form part of the Council's archives.

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## **Saskatchewan Provincial Council Vice President**

### **Annual Report 2023**

Helen Kayfish

In my position as Provincial Vice President, I assisted the provincial president when asked. This included summarizing the convention evaluations and assisting at the workshop in presentations.

There were 56 Saskatchewan councils out of 110, that completed the annual report survey for 2023. Many have switched to the new structure and others are asking for assistance.

#### **Membership and Recruitment:**

Parish councils used many ways to encourage new membership. This is a challenge for most councils. I created a provincial contest to help encourage parish councils to recruit new members. The council with the largest percentage of new members at the end February would receive free registration to the Provincial Convention in June. There will also be a draw from the new members for several prizes.

Communication with members is important to councils and they report that they are regularly contacting existing member in order to retain their membership. Contacting those who do not regularly attend meetings is also important and email is the means most commonly used for communication..

#### **Unity Outreach Project**

The Unity Outreach visits were well received and parish councils were happy to have the opportunity to provide their input and ask questions.

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# Saskatchewan Provincial Council Faith

## Annual Report 2023

Wendy Dale

**Note:** *Laura Novecosky held this position from June 2022 until December 31, 2023, when she had to resign for personal reasons. Wendy Dale took over Faith as she formerly held the Health and Education position and then shared the Social Justice position with Lynn Jones as we transitioned to the new structure. Thank you Laura for all of your valued contribution to the provincial executive.*

As I have only been in this position for a limited amount of time, it was very interesting to go through the submitted reports to see what our Councils are doing. I am amazed by how involved our members are in the aspects of faith. Building ecumenical relationships, and caring for people at all stages of life are critical for living as disciples of Christ. Some Councils are using a lot of initiatives from the National website to keep their members informed of current issues and also to plan meetings that get more members involved. I think these really need to be highlighted and celebrated so that all Councils have those same levels of success. Work has already been done – it just needs to be found and then in some cases adapted to a particular Council so that committee chairs do not burn out.

### **Spiritual Growth of Members**

Many Councils reported incorporating new prayers into their regular meetings. Some of these came from the National website, others from a variety of places including the Hallow App, Ascension press (Catechism and Bible in a Year), Diocesan websites, and information from Communiques. Online retreats and book studies were also attended. Familiar ways of praying included starting meetings with Mass, leading Stations of the Cross during Lent, Ignatian Gospel Contemplation during Opening spiritual time, including the Pope's Prayer Intention for the month, the Rosary (in many different forms), and doing the liturgical ministries at Masses designated as CWL Sunday Masses. Gathering together to watch The Chosen with discussion after was also enjoyed by some Councils.

### **Study of Catholic Teachings**

This is closely connected to spiritual growth in many Councils. Studying portions of Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti would be followed by prayer, in many cases, a new prayer. Members were involved in Bible studies, and learning more about the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church through Ascension Press online. Members have participated in Horizons of Hope, Indigenous Pastoral Lay Ministry Education and have used the national website resources. Guest speakers have addressed topics of human trafficking, homelessness, palliative care, support for pregnant women, and Walking Together (Truth and Reconciliation). Members were involved in the Synod on Synodality and kept their Councils up to date on that progress.

### **Role of Women in the Church and Lay Ministries**

Councils have members who function in all liturgical aspects of the Mass. Outside of Mass, members are taking Holy Communion to the homebound and those in nursing homes. They are

doing Catechetical work with children and RCIA. They lead prayer groups and centering prayer. Some Councils focus on the women from the Gospels and readings from Mass and their importance in ministry. Several Councils found the resources from the National website to be a good starting point for further discussion and action in their parishes.

### **Ecumenism and inter-faith endeavours**

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and the World Day of Prayer are prominent highlights in the majority of our Councils. Councils host and share hosting responsibilities with other Churches in their communities which has developed into friendships and relationships that extend past these two events. Bible study, card exchanges, picnics, socials, putting hampers together, Lent and Advent interdenominational prayer gatherings, Carol festivals, and shared lunches are some examples of how our Councils are working ecumenically with women of their communities to enhance each other spiritually.

### **Sanctity of Life**

Taking part in the Palliative Care Pro-Life 40 hours for life happened in many councils, and some made it an ecumenical event. Vigils were held, and some councils had speakers on the topic of palliative care. Letters were sent to Government, and participation in the postcard campaign to revoke mental illness as a condition for MAiD was reported by many Councils. Several councils have integrated the Spiritual Adoption of Babies in danger of abortion prayers into their monthly meetings. Support for Pregnancy Options centers happens through ‘Baby Shower’ meetings where there are speakers and donations brought by members. Many Councils have standing donations that happen annually toward various pro-life causes.

### **Vocations**

Councils reported supporting parish priests and formation programs for young women and men through financial gifts, prayer, and by having guest speakers.

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## Saskatchewan Provincial Council Service

### Annual Report 2023

Patsy Salzl

Service is means to encourage members to participate in society. This includes their members, their parish and the community at large. Parish councils that completed the survey provided many ways that their members responded to this encouragement.

#### **Service to members, the parish and community through education and action**

A number of parishes invited guest speakers to talk on various mental health related issues. Palliative care was a topic at many parishes and the CCCB “Horizon’s of Hope” workshop was delivered at several parishes. Human Trafficking awareness was widely supported in the Saskatoon Diocese. The environment was a priority for many and recycle and reuse was a common theme as was recognizing Earth Day. Pregnancy Crisi centers are well supported by our members and baby showers were held by councils to gather articles to donate. Refugees were supported by several councils providing clothes and household items that were needed. Refugees from Ukraine and Pakistan were identified specifically. Assistance was also given to families from the Philippines. Support of the CWL Clothing depot was mentioned often both through donation of items for sale and volunteer hours working at the Depot. Fund raising consisted of rummage sales, bake sales and raffles.

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## **Saskatchewan Provincial Council Social Justice**

### **Annual Report 2023**

**Lynn Jones**

I had the privilege of presenting the Unity project to some of our CWL's in southern Saskatchewan in the last half of 2023 and found it rewarding and enlightening. Rewarding to see members who I only get to see at the conventions and enlightening to see that CWL is alive and busy with helping our individual parishes. It is too bad we are so far apart. It would be wonderful to visit parishes more often.

#### **Education**

After reviewing all the submitted reports I noticed that several of our members attend Bible Study on a regular basis and encourage their families to attend with them.

It was encouraging to see the many ways members tackled educating their members.

- a. Put out books to read for those members who don't have access.
- b. One member is a Catechist Friend for the Archdiocese and promotes Catholic education within the deanery.
- c. Several Parishes purchased Catholic education materials for the students who are in Sacramental Prep programs. Some of these members also teach religion in after school programs.
- d. Some of our members are employees of the Catholic School Division and help promote Catholic education daily.
- e. Most councils have had guest speakers in to talk about many CWL issues.

I wish I could document all the wonderful works that were submitted. Please keep up the great work!

#### **Legislation**

I was grateful to see several parishes helped support Bill C-22 by mailing in the postcards that were handed out at our Provincial Convention last June. It is getting closer and closer to being funded.

MAID was another huge issue. This morning the Opposition parties are calling for a pause on MAID expansion for mental illness. Our letter writing campaigns, postcards and contacting our MP's is working.

Some members attended the rally for Missing Women Awareness Day.

Some of the other Bills that were acted on or monitored are:

Bill C7 – MAID

Bill C230 – National Strategy to Redress Environmental Racism Act

Bill C248 – Enactment amends the Canada National Parks Act to establish Ojibway National Urban Park of Canada

Bill C281 – Forced Child Labour

Bill C270 – Amends Criminal Code (pornographic material)

Bill C217 – Development of a national strategy in relation to fresh water

Bill C230 – Protection of Freedom of Conscience

Petitions and Postcards seemed to be the most used actions regarding government legislation. Letter writing falls behind for CWL as actions.

### **Resolutions**

Resolutions is an important part of our CWL. It takes many hours of collaboration and work.

I want to thank St Anne’s Council in Saskatoon for putting forward a resolution on Proclaiming February 22, 2024, and onward as Saskatchewan Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

The resolutions handbook that the CWL National prepared and is on the National website was used by 16% of our councils who replied but on a sadder note 67% were not interested in the development of resolutions.

Further the likelihood of members participating in resolutions is decreasing even more. Lack of Interest was 39% and challenges with technology was 30% were the biggest reasons.

I am looking forward to reading all the Unity Project suggestions to see how we can get more members involved in this very important part of the Social Justice Pillar.

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## Saskatchewan Provincial Council Past President

### Annual Report, 2023

Chantal Devine

In 2023 there were 659 respondents to the annual report survey sent out by national office. The returns from the two larger dioceses, Regina and Saskatoon were equal at 43%, while the Prince Albert Diocese had 14% of the returns. The Regina Diocese was in a unique position this past year due to the untimely resignation of the past president. For the council president, not having the assistance of a past president increased her responsibilities and deprived her of the valuable support past presidents offer.

One of the duties of past presidents is to assist their council president and executive members in whatever way they are able. When asked about the instances they'd been consulted in their capacity as past president they responded:

- In the president's absence, helped the vice-president finalize the agenda and co-chair the meeting.
- Available to the president and council members when consulted about the work of the League i.e. service awards, fundraising, church activities, protocol, organizing food hampers, honour guards, elections, bulletins, and archives.
- Assisted in completing the annual report.
- Facilitated councils with the Unity Project.
- Worked with the annual membership drive.
- Mentored new executive members in understanding their duties on the executive, and in understanding the different levels of the League.
- One council reported not having a past president and another council reported having two past presidents acting as co-presidents for their council.

When past presidents were asked if they worked on/updated the council archives in the past year, 57% said they had and the remaining 43% had not. However, when asked if they made archived material such as photo albums available at meetings or events, the majority, 61% said they had.

None of the councils that responded to the survey had a history book to share with national.

The third duty as stated in the *Handbook for Past Presidents* is "(c) facilitate and encourage the study and implementation of the *Constitution and Bylaws*." When past presidents were asked if some of the most recent updates made to the *Constitution and Bylaws* were discussed at their meetings, 57% stated they had, while the remaining 32% had not.

Over three years ago, Past National President, Anne- Marie Gorman, asked that past presidents at the provincial level make a concerted effort to assist all diocesan and parish councils to create a manual of policy and procedure for their councils. When the assistance of the provincial past

president was offered in the past three years, only a few councils asked for help in compiling their manual. The response to the question on whether councils had made updates to their council's policy and procedure may have indicated that many councils do not have a manual to update! Thirty- two percent had made updates, while the majority, 68% replied that they had not.

The 2023 annual report reflected that past presidents were a valuable group of women who have supported their council presidents and their executives in whatever way possible. Their assistance has helped to sustain the life of their councils.

In support of all past presidents and members in the League, I offer the following recommendations:

1. More encouragement be offered to councils to complete the annual report.
2. Have past presidents at the provincial or diocesan level offer workshops on the importance of maintaining council archives and writing a council history book.
3. To better understand all levels of the League, past presidents could lead councils in reading and discussing one segment of the *Constitution and Bylaws* at each meeting.
4. Continue to assist councils to compile their own policy and procedure manual.
5. If a past president needs to step down, she should assist her president in finding a member to assume the responsibilities of the archives and history portion of her convenorship.