



Kingston Diocesan Council
Legislation Standing Committee
Directive # 7
January 31, 2015

Dear Sisters in the League,

We are beginning a new year! Let us greet 2015 with renewed enthusiasm and an eagerness to share with others, at home and abroad, the good things given us.

In her article in the November issue of Betty's Blog, our provincial online newsletter, Provincial Legislation Chair, Linda Squarzolo informs us of some of the bills introduced by the Ontario government. They include ...

- Ministry of the Environment – Bill 9 – An Act to Amend the Environmental Protection Act
- Ministry of Education – Bill 10 - The Child Care Modernization Act
- Ministry of Finance – Bill 15 – Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates
- Ministry of Health – Bill 21 - Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act

Several private member bills were also introduced for First Reading. They include

- Bill 2 – Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Bill 3 – Planning Amendment Act (Enabling Municipalities to Require Inclusionary Housing)
- Bill 12 – Protecting Employees' Tips Act (With Respect to Tips and Other Gratuities)
- Bill 17 – Protecting Child Performers
- Bill 19 – Ombudsman Amendment Act (Investigation of Health Care Services) Bill 20 – Ryan's Law (Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools)
- Bill 22 – Employment Standards Amendment Act (Greater Protection for Interns And Vulnerable Workers)

In the Fall issue of the Trillium Magazine, Linda refers to the 2013 resolution of reducing the stigma of mental illness, approved at the Provincial Convention. At the national convention this past August, guest speaker, retired Canadian Senator Honourable Michael Kirby, spoke to us on the topic "Mental Health and Young People." He was part of a senate committee in 2001 studying health care and got involved in mental health. These are some of the highlights of his discoveries made during that time of study that he shared with us.

- Often, the stigma of mental health prevents kids and youth from getting the help and support they need.
- Often mental illness begins with a mood disorder before the age of 20.

- If diagnosed quickly, the chances of getting better, or managing the symptoms, are high.
- To get free help, one must be referred to a psychiatrist and the wait is 12 to 18 months.
- The services of clinical psychologists, counsellors or social workers can also be valuable in helping the children and their families deal with the mental illnesses, but these services are not free.
- Senator Kirby noted that only 25% of youth with a mental illness get the help they need and suicide is the second leading cause of death in those between the ages of 15 and 24.

Armed with these unsettling facts and statistics, Mr. Kirby is on a mission to help reduce the stigma of mental health in children. He is asking CWL members to write letters to their provincial governments asking them to cover the cost of eight sessions with a professional per child, so those suffering from mental illnesses can more readily receive the help they need. More information on this topic can be found at www.rightbyyou.ca

The Private Member's Bill (C-356) which refers to the National Strategy for Dementia Act, brought to the attention of the Catholic bishops by the executive of CCCB (see the January OPC Communications Bulletin on the National Website), calls on the Government of Canada...

- to increase funding for research to promote earlier diagnosis and intervention
- to strengthen the integration of primary, home and community care
- to enhance the skills and training of the dementia workforce, and
- to improve support for caregivers.

I received a letter from St. Gregory parish council president, in which she states she was very distressed about a recent front page article in the National Post. It was in regard to a survey which indicated that people would now "not be opposed to physician-assisted suicide". "I'm in shock," she writes, "at the reversal of sentiment from a handful of Canadians. I know the Catholic Women's League is supporting the Catholic Civil Rights League in their effort to oppose this, but my concern is the apathy that so many people have, and the impotence they feel in their ability to affect legislation".

I am grateful to have received this letter as I too, fully believe we cannot allow ourselves to become complacent over such an important issue.

So, what are we do with all this information? I suggest the following Action Plan for your councils ...

1. Write to your MP urging him/her to **vehemently reject** Bill C- 581: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (physician-assisted death)
2. Write your MP urging him/her **to not support** Bill C 582: An Act to establish the Canadian Commission on Physician –Assisted Death.
3. Urge your members to check the League website to view a letter written to the Prime Minister of Canada by our National President, Barbara Dowding; the League's position paper on euthanasia and assisted suicide; and the League's call for a national palliative care strategy. Consider adding this in your weekly bulletin inserts.

4. Go to the website www.rightbyyou.ca and learn more about the Honourable Michael Kirby's work about reducing the stigma of mental illness. Write a letter to our provincial government, as stated above, to give him our support.
5. Go to the website ontla.ca/web/bills to get further information on the Private Members Bills listed above.
6. Contact your local MP to show your support for Bill C- 356, National Strategy for Dementia Act, and to ask that they also support this most important legislation.
7. Have your Legislation Chair form a subcommittee so tasks won't seem so daunting. In the absence of a Chair, try to find a volunteer who may be willing to look into even just one of the issues.
8. Consider a "Letter Writing" afternoon. Have letters and envelopes (already addressed either by hand or with labels) available to hand out at meetings or before and after Masses to include all the parishioners. They need only sign it and leave it with volunteer members to mail.
9. Remember, you may write AS a member of the Catholic Women's League but never ON BEHALF OF the Catholic Women's League.

May our new theme, One Heart, One Voice, One Mission be our source of motivation to put our faith into action and may Our Lady of Good Counsel continue to intercede for us in all that we do for God and Canada.

Respectfully submitted,
 Margie Royle.
 Legislation Chair, Kingston Diocesan Council

Our Lady was full of God because she lived for God alone, yet she thought of herself only as the handmaid of the Lord. Let us do the same. **Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta**