

**Alberta Mackenzie Provincial Council
The Catholic Women's League of Canada**

Education and Health Communiqué #5

Mary H., Chairperson

January, 2018



“Inspired by the Spirit; Women Respond to God’s Call”

As we usher in 2018 let us strengthen our resolve to be informed and take action in the areas of Education and Health and make a difference in our communities... For your convenience, please find the Education & Health Resolutions passed at the 2017 National Convention at the end of this communiqué

Health

We are called to action...

- **Angel Cradle Program saves an infant in 2017** Covenant Health in Edmonton has reported that it has saved its first abandoned newborn baby this year through its safe haven program. The Angel Cradle program opened in 2013 at the Grey Nuns and Misericordia Hospitals as the result of a recommendation made by the CWL in the Diocese of Edmonton. The newborn was healthy and discharged to the Ministry of Child and Family Services. Program spokespeople have commented that there are expecting parents that for a complexity of reasons do not believe they are to care for a baby. The Angel Cradle provides an additional option for people. The Edmonton program is modelled on the one at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver where since 2010 two infants have been rescued. The Canadian Mental Health Association and Covenant Health have partnered in a poster campaign to raise awareness about Angel Cradle. There was a case of abandonment in Calgary on Christmas Eve 2017 where a newborn was found dead in a parking lot. It was reported the baby had been born healthy. At this time, Calgary does not have a venue(s) for parents to drop off an unwanted child. Since there are no Catholic run hospitals in Calgary, perhaps our CWL members might undertake a leadership position to partner with other faith communities in establishing a similar program in their city. There is certainly public support.

- **Flu Season**



The 2017/18 Influenza Immunization Program is ongoing. Alberta Health Services reminds us that:

- Influenza immunizations are available, free of charge, to all Albertans six months of age and older, through [AHS clinics](#), pharmacies and physicians.
- Plan ahead to arm yourself and your family against influenza this season!
- Please note: children less than nine years of age must be immunized at an AHS Clinic. Pharmacists cannot immunize children less than nine years of age. Find a clinic for your whole family by clicking the button below.

Please remember that the very young and the elderly are particularly susceptible to influenza. Be sure to wash your hands frequently!

- **Dental Benefits for Seniors**

Dental health is very important as we age as neglected dental problems can lead to other health conditions including heart disease.

Seniors in Alberta are eligible to apply for dental benefits without paying insurance premiums under a program that provides up to a maximum of \$5000.00 over 5 years and covers most basic dental procedures as well as dentures. To qualify, seniors have to be 65 years of age or older, must be Canadian Citizens or Permanent Residents, must have lived Alberta for the 3 months prior to application and must fall within the income parameters set out by the plan. If you qualify, be sure to apply through your dentist for these benefits.



Why we should include exercise in our daily routines:

1. Exercise is good for your whole body particularly for your heart and brain.
2. Exercise is a great stress-reducer. Sitting all the time is the worst thing you can do. Sedentary behavior can be just as risky as smoking...motivate yourself to get up and move every hour.
3. Exercise combats fatigue...if you don't move your body, it just starts to freeze.
4. Exercise will simply make you feel better...

- **Lyme Disease:** In early August, an email was sent to the Education & Health Chairs in the five Dioceses reminding you to send letters of support regarding Lyme Disease to the two Mothers of children living with Lyme Disease to take with them to their meeting with Federal Minister of

Health Jane Philpott. Please look at the optimistic video update posted by these two women about their meeting which you will find at www.change.org/p/minister-philpott-ticking-lyme-bomb-in-canada-fix-canada-s-lyme-action-plan-now

Physician Assisted Dying & Euthanasia. In Manitoba, Bill 34 was passed that protects medical professionals who choose not to participate in medical assistance in dying. Over 4,400 letters were sent from the Archdiocese of Winnipeg. Is this an initiative that Albertans should look at doing as well? Please contact me if you would like to work on such an initiative in our province. We would be sure to gather support from other faith communities.

- **Legalization of Marijuana in Alberta:** Government departments are scrambling to be ready for recreational cannabis to be legal in the summer of 2018 which will impact driving laws, workplace safety, the protection of public health, the hosting of public events and the anticipated need for educating youth about the dangers of cannabis which needs to be evidence rather than shock based.



What does Pope Francis say about Genetics?

In speaking at a Vatican-organized conference that underlined the need for global awareness of Huntington's disease (a degenerative and incurable brain disorder) Pope Francis praised scientists for searching for treatments for genetic diseases but cautioned against the use of human embryos in their research. Pope Francis went on to say "But we know that no ends, even noble in themselves—such as a predicted utility for science, for other human beings for society – can justify the destruction of human embryos".

Another speaker at the conference, John DiCamillo, an ethicist at the National Catholic Bioethics Centre spoke about the potentially dangerous outcome of modifying the genes of unborn children to create "designer babies" with enhanced capabilities. This raises the question of how much modification and enhancement is permissible.

Pope Francis praised and encouraged the in increasing collaboration between science & religion to address climate change. He called on the two communities to work together in finding creative solutions to other urgent problems lie water shortages, food security and renewable forms of energy.

- **Mental Health & Addictions:** For their passionate advocacy for people with disabilities and mental illnesses, Albertans, Catherine & Austin Mardon have received a rare form of recognition from the Vatican and have been invested into the Pontifical Order of Pope Saint Sylvester, one of five Orders of Knighthood awarded directly by the Pope. Archbishop Richard Smith presented

them with their Latin-inscribed parchment diplomas of membership on December 21st, 2017.

Catherine served as an Edmonton Diocesan Officer from 2013-2017.

Education

We are called to action...

In October, Albertans were given the opportunity to elect Catholic school board trustees. Many of our councils hosted successful election forums aimed at providing information to voters so that they were able to make informed choices when choosing their candidates.

Remember that we are called to promote, protect and preserve Catholic education by supporting our Catholic schools in providing exceptional Catholic education opportunities to Alberta families.

Alberta Catholic School Board Trustees Association: In September, June Fuller and I met with Adriana LaGrange, Chair of ACSTA and their Executive Director, Dean Sarnecki to discuss how the CWL can better understand and support Catholic education in our communities. At that time, their hope was to stop or mitigate Bill 24. ACSTRA are keenly interested in working with the CWL and the Knights of Columbus in support of Catholic schools in our province. June and I also met with Knights of Columbus State Deputy Ron Shuster to discuss our mutual interest in Catholic education and how we might best collaborate and are happy to report that the Knights are fully on-board.

In November, June and I were invited to attend the Catholic School Board Trustees Conference where Provincial Education Minister David Eggen indicated that he is in support of Catholic Education in the province but did not go so far as to say *Publicly funded Catholic Education* which is very important to us as Catholics. Recently, it was reported that almost one third of Albertans in the census indicated their faith to be Catholic which makes us a significant portion of the electorate and we need to be united and strong and let our voices be heard.

Bill 28: School Amendment Act, 2017 (Eggen) passes Third Reading -

The *School Amendment Act* promises to pave the way for new professional standards for principals and superintendents, which would ensure that they are equipped to lead modern, inclusive schools that are carefully administered and able to prepare every student for success.

School Amendment Act includes:

- Minister is authorized to establish standards for education service agreements between First Nations and school boards to help close the achievement gap for Indigenous students.
- Determination that students must be five years of age by December 31 of the school year to register in kindergarten so students entering school are ready to succeed.
- Ensuring the government can provide clear and updated transportation eligibility criteria before the 2018-19 school year.

- Revising the process for establishing a separate school district, reducing confusion and building more support for the school district within communities. (Does this raise any concerns for Catholic School Districts?)

The Catholic Women’s Leadership Foundation Inaugural Leadership Program begins in May, 2018. It is our understanding that several applications were received from Alberta Mackenzie and we hope that one or more of our candidates will be selected to participate in this important program designed to develop leadership skills in women who have a genuine desire to make a difference in their communities, places of work and parishes...we will keep you posted!

Environment

Energy Efficiency Alberta has been mandated in keeping with climate leadership and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, to invite Albertans to participate in a provincial initiative allowing Albertans to purchase energy efficient products which includes items such as windows, doors, tankless water heaters and insulation; to mention just a few. **Energy Efficiency Alberta** has an annual budget of \$132 million and is entering its second year of operations. <https://www.encyalberta.ca>

Water Quality : A little known agency based in Calgary is making a “splash” in improving global access to safe drinking water and sanitation in developing countries. The **Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST)** is based on a unique model which addresses the global need for safe drinking water and sanitation by building local knowledge and skills on household solutions people can implement themselves. Following is information from the CAWST website:

“CAWST has one of the strongest water and sanitation technical teams in the international development sector, with particular expertise in decentralized water and sanitation options and capacity building of field workers. CAWST doesn’t implement water and sanitation projects nor fund projects, but rather builds the capacity of local organizations to provide water and sanitation services to their own communities. Those 970 implementing clients have reached 11.4 million people in 78 countries with better water or sanitation. CAWST’s extensive [training and education materials](#) are shared freely for anyone to download, modify and use as they see fit and have been used by others to train five million people.

Water and sanitation in developing countries may seem far removed from our daily reality in Alberta, but it is a fundamental need for almost half the world: 1.8 billion people are drinking fecally contaminated water and 2.4 billion don’t have access to an adequate toilet. Have you ever looked at your toilet with gratitude for the impact it makes on your life? Without a toilet and a reliable, affordable source of safe drinking water our quality of life would be drastically diminished.

Did you know?

- Globally, an estimated 842,000 people die each year due to preventable diarrheal disease; 43% of which are children under the age of five
- Chronic diarrhea and intestinal worms in children, mainly from inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene, cause half of global malnutrition and one quarter of stunting
- Waterborne diseases cause children to miss school, adults to lose income (they have no paid sick days), and pregnant women and newborn babies to face serious health risks
- Girls drop out of school when they reach puberty and women are at risk of violence when they go out at night to find a private spot

For all these reasons, unsafe water and inadequate sanitation are recognized as root causes of poverty. In 2015, all the countries of the United Nations came together with unprecedented agreement on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#); global goals which acknowledge the immense challenges of our time and define the world we want to see. In particular, Goal 6 commits us to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. We can and should contribute and Albertans, with our engineering knowledge, wealth and volunteer spirit, are well positioned to do so”.

HEALTH & EDUCATION RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE 2017 NATIONAL CONVENTION:

2017.03 Zero-Rated Status Under the Goods and Services Tax Provisions of the Excise Tax Act for Child Safety Products

Whereas, the cost of child safety products listed in the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act is subject to the goods and services tax provisions of the Excise Tax Act; and

Whereas, the federal government has the authority to identify certain goods and services as being zero-rated for the goods and services tax; therefore, be it

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada in 97th annual national convention assembled urge the federal government to grant zero-rated status for regulated child safety products under the goods and services tax provisions of the Excise Tax Act.

Action Plan

1. Write letters to the federal government requesting the removal of the federal portion of tax from child safety products.
2. Invite a guest speaker to educate members on the requirements for the child safety Products.
3. Hold a fundraiser for a local young mothers group to purchase safety products for those in need.
4. Study the list of products in the Canada Safety Act and ascertain if any other products Should be listed as well.
5. Educate the public on the provincial rebate for child safety products.

6. Continue to monitor this issue.

2017.04 Protection from Coercion of Conscience for Healthcare Professionals

Whereas, under the Criminal Code of Canada, healthcare professionals do not have protection from being coerced into referring for, or performing procedures that are in opposition to their charter rights of freedom of conscience and religion; and

Whereas, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes and upholds the right of conscience, religion, thought and belief of all citizens, including healthcare professionals; therefore, be it

Resolved, that national council of The Catholic Women's League of Canada in 97th annual national convention assembled urge the federal government to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to be consistent with the Canadian 14 Charter of Rights and Freedoms by making it an offence to coerce 15 healthcare professionals into referring for, or performing procedures that 16 are in opposition to their charter rights of freedom of conscience and religion.

Action Plan

1. Write to the Prime Minister and Attorney General with copies to your local member of 80 parliament urging them to make it an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada for 81 healthcare professionals to be coerced into performing or referring patients for 82 procedures that are in opposition to their conscience.
2. Educate members and the community on the importance of healthcare professionals' right of conscience.
3. Find ways to support healthcare workers who will not perform procedures that are in 88 opposition to their conscience.

A new year...a new resolve to let the Holy Spirit inspire us to serve others in our Alberta communities so that we make a difference in the quality of life in our province. Please contact with me with any information, questions or concerns you might have...

For God and Canada,

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