

## Education and Health Committee Oral Report, June 2017

**Lyme Disease:** In response to several inquiries for more information on what is being done by the Alberta government, Betsy Fletcher and I co-wrote a communique in March of this year giving information and links to the May 2016 Lyme Disease Conference Report. Both the federal and Alberta provincial government intend to support citizens with Lyme disease. However, it is important to continue bringing awareness of ways to prevent infection as well as making sure the governments follow through on finding ways to support those already affected by Lyme disease.

**Seniors Advocate:** [www.seniorsadvocatedab.ca](http://www.seniorsadvocatedab.ca) All are encouraged to visit this website. The Alberta Seniors Advocate was established under ministerial order and Dr. Sheree Kwong See was appointed September 1, 2016 until December 3, 2019. Her office is in Edmonton and it was established to support seniors, their families and caregivers by providing them with information and resolution support, navigation and referral services. Dr. See reports annually and meets regularly with the Minister of Seniors and Housing and her deputies. Dr. See can request as appropriate the inspection of provincial facilities and programs but is ultimately responsible to the minister.

We are still concerned that this Seniors' Advocate is not an independent one. Both the Health Advocate and the Mental Health Patient Advocate have the authority to investigate complaints and refer to other bodies to assist. We still need to lobby the government to make the Seniors' Advocate an office independent of the government.

**Marketing resulting in child obesity:** Fran Lucas' April 3, 2017 communique cited the recent report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. She calls us to be aware of "how the food and beverage industry is marketing our children and youth to death" – the report's subtitle.

Canadian marketing directly targets youth under 17 and these children are encouraged to consume sweet, salty and fatty foods. As a result child obesity rates have tripled since 1979 and today almost one third of Canadian children are overweight or obese.

We are encouraged to learn, however, that legislation can work, as the Quebec Consumer Protection Act of 1980 which banned advertising of all goods and services at those under the age of 13. Children now in Quebec have the lowest rate of obesity among 6-11 year olds and the highest rate of vegetable and fruit consumption.

I encourage you to read the full report: The kids are not alright.

**CCCB's Statement on Canada's Opioid Crisis and Drug Addiction:** On April 12, 2017, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a statement, describing the Canadian Opioid Crisis causes and effects and makes recommendations for addressing the problem from a Christian perspective.

Specifically, we can:

- Urge elected officials to give the overdose crisis the attention it deserves
- Call for more education around safe-prescribing practices
- Ask the federal government to tighten regulation of opioid manufacturing
- Advocate for improved pain management training
- Promote support services in parishes
- Support police in doing educational presentations in schools and communities, and

- Contribute financially to organizations on the frontlines of this battle.

I would encourage all of us to read this statement.

**Memo on MAiD (medical assistance in dying):** from our National President Margaret Ann Jacobs, May 15, 2017. The Catholic Women's League is not to support MAiD, the procedures of which entail euthanasia or physician assisted suicide because they are morally wrong.

Steps we can take as individuals:

- Take the initiative to find out what the policy is in our local facility and voice our concerns.
- Pray that hospice facilities do not make medical assistance in dying available.
- Continue to pray for quality palliative care using the resources that have been developed for "12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care" available on the national website.

**Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association 2016 Annual Report:** is available on their website. This year they are celebrating 50 years as an organization, and are pleased to report that "they are truly grateful that our member boards have helped us to work together to ensure that we are living out our mission – To celebrate, preserve, promote, and enhance Catholic education." If you get a chance to congratulate your local trustees, please do so. Without them, we would not have strong Catholic Education in this province.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Vandenberg  
Provincial Committee Chair of Education and Health.