

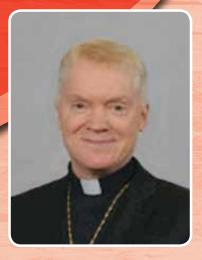


2019 Annual Report Summary





National Spiritual Advisor's Message



Most Rev. Stephen Jensen, Bishop of Prince George

National Spiritual Advisor





Throughout the first full year during my term as national spiritual advisor, I was pleased to offer some thoughts on what I had observed, experienced and learned as I worked with the national executive/board and staff.

First, on behalf of the bishops of Canada, I expressed appreciation for the League's solidarity with us in promoting the life of faith and service in the parishes of the dioceses. The League was a strong partner for pastors in their efforts to build parish communities. The League's initiatives to address moral issues that affected everyone in Canada strengthened the church's witness and changed many lives for the better. I commended the national leadership for understanding and supporting the bishops' efforts to strengthen the Catholic identity of Development and Peace—Caritas Canada, a work that would continue.

I attended the meetings of the board and, in the summer, the meeting of the resolutions committee that carefully reviewed proposals from the provincial level. I was very impressed by the dedication, professionalism and wisdom evident in the League's national leadership. Its commitment to the highest standards of policy development ensured the League's voice would be taken seriously in the councils of government.

As the implementation phase of the strategic plan unrolled, the need for effective communication of the plan to spiritual advisors and parish priests would be paramount. I would suggest that provincial presidents share the PowerPoint presentation with diocesan presidents, who could ask their bishops for time at a clergy study day or in deanery meetings to present the plan to pastors.

The job description for the national spiritual advisor listed three primary goals: he should be accessible to the national executive and, in particular, the national president, provide advice and guidance for spiritual programs and participate in meetings and conventions. I enjoyed working with an impressive group of women who guided the League at the national level, and I look forward to another year of service together.

National President's Message

Anne-Marie Gorman

National President

The provincial councils consisted of numbers ranging from fewer than 300 to more than 41,000 members for a total of more than 75,000 in 1,176 parish councils. Varying numbers of membership and parish councils resulted in numerous opportunities to learn from one another. Response rates for parish council reporting were up in most provincial councils. Nationally, 68% of parish councils submitted an annual report, of which 96% had a sitting president, while 60% had been president more than once. The importance of the League in the spiritual growth of members set the organization apart from all other women's organizations in Canada and was what kept members engaged. Many parish councils had more senior members; however, many places saw a modicum of relatively younger leadership. One provincial council reported 72% of presidents were 11-25 year members.

The most common method to inform members about the League's position was through *The Canadian League* (89%), but also of great assistance were national communiqués and diocesan newsletters, followed by provincial and national websites and parish bulletins. To a lesser extent, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) website, Internet searches, local newspapers and the

Catholic Organization for Life and Family, in that order, were used to inform members. The parish priest, other Catholic organizations, minutes, regional meetings and personal telephone conversations were also ways in which parish presidents received information to share with members.

Predominant national priorities taken up by parish councils included the national theme, Care for Our Common Home (86%), medical assistance in dying (69%), and removing the attestation clause in the Canada Summer Jobs Program (52%), the latter two of which were in response to nationally adopted resolutions. Besides these, parish councils actively supported palliative care in their communities, hospice services, rights of the pre-born, establishment of standards for products labelled flushable and the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Human trafficking had become an issue of concern in all provincial councils, and genetics education was researched as it applied to bioethics. Members read and discussed the CCCB document Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation, and the Laudato 'Si encyclical.





The many ways members introduced the aforementioned topics included whole meeting discussion upon reading the documents (95%), program presentations by standing committee chairpersons and speakers whose expertise were in the fields (39% and 30% respectively). Letter-writing sessions during meetings, discussion from a newsletter article and taking part in online surveys were also used. The Pornography Hurts postcard campaign was well used to get the League's message to federal government. Members were encouraged to and found ways to be more environmentally conscious.

Almost 50% of parish councils reported meeting with the spiritual advisor monthly. A small number met weekly, annually or never. Twenty-seven per cent met rarely. However, 92% reported the spiritual advisor was supportive. Reasons stated for being unable to meet with the spiritual advisor included his duties outside the parish, serving several parishes, a lack of tradition of the spiritual advisor's interaction with the council formally, distance to travel to meet with parish councils and health issues relating to the advisor. Sixty-six per cent of respondents reported other reasons for not meeting, most of which were connected to a lack of understanding of the League, resulting in a lack of interest by the advisor.

Primary resources used by parish councils were the *Constitution & Bylaws* (63%), parish council policy manual (59%), *Executive Handbook* (54%), *National Manual of Policy and Procedure* (44%), followed by *Robert's Rules of Order* and *Parliamentary Procedure*. Parish councils reported the strong support of immediate past presidents, life members, long-serving members and executive members, and resources such as annual calendars of events and minutes books.

The parish council president was a signing officer for the council. She signed cheques, bank documents, letters directed internally and outside the League, and supported through her signature petitions.

The president represented her parish council within the church and in the broader community. Church functions (91%)

were at the top of the list, followed by diocesan meetings and conventions (76%), special masses, fundraising events (58%), sacramental celebrations, regional meetings (50%), community events (48%), workshops and conferences (47%), provincial meetings and conventions (36%). To a lesser extent, she took part in or attended pro-life events, national convention and meetings with her member of the legislature. The obvious importance for the parish council was to support events in the parish, while meetings and events within the region followed closely. Attending provincial and national conventions was an area where more encouragement might be needed if it would result in greater support and engagement of members when they returned to their parish council. Having given the aforementioned percentages, parish councils in very high numbers took part in the annual national initiative "12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care" and seasonal programs within their parishes, were faithful in support at funerals and all parish events generally.

Related to members' attendance at events, conferences and conventions may have been the ability to subsidize costs. The majority of parish councils (72%) did not provide subsidies for attendance at events where costs were incurred; 22% covered the entire costs, while a small number (four per cent and two per cent), paid 50% and 25% of related expenses. To educate, inform and engage members, workshops were developed and provided at the least cost to attendees. Members needed to be fed, spiritually and intellectually; hence, there may have been a need to consider how to support members financially to attend events. Assistance to attend diocesan convention, for example, ranged from 55% to cover all costs to a low of five per cent paying 25% of costs. Parish councils reported less financial support to attend provincial and national conventions at 35% and 15% respectively.

There was a slight division among parish councils with regard to having a policy and procedure manual. Fifty-seven per cent had one; 43% did not. A slight majority of those that did not have a manual indicated it would be

helpful to have one and would like assistance to develop it. While most parish councils did not form new policies, many updated existing policies, such as funeral protocols, welcoming ceremonies, pre-paid memberships, awards, bursaries and scholarships, distribution of funds and dates for regularly scheduled events in the parish year.

The resources available to parish councils were well used. The *Executive Handbook* was used by 86% of parish councils and was noted as very helpful. Those that did not make use of this resource relied on members' expertise, were familiar enough with duties, did not find the handbook helpful for their parish council or neglected to study the document.

In keeping members informed annually, most parish councils provided a report. More presented the report orally (65%) than in written form (54%), while some e-mailed the report to members (46%). If this were included as part of the written report, it might have raised the percentage, but this was not completely clear from the survey. Close to one-third included a summary of the year's events in the bulletin or parish newsletter.

Parish councils demonstrated an overwhelming charism of service from the number of committees appointed throughout the year, beyond the formal standing committees. Some of these included annual events, funeral, social events, fundraising, visiting, bursary/scholarship, donations, catering, policy, telephone tree, community outreach, prayer chain, prayer shawl, hospitality, awards and ceremonies for members, church premises and a "courtesy" committee.

To say parish councils were centred in service and advocacy was exemplified by the myriad of times the parish president represented Christian values in the community and beyond. She organized petitions—"Time to Care" was noted as one where increased care to residents in residential homes was initiated. Besides giving a monthly report to council, a summary of the national convention, and updates on the strategic plan, the president spoke on and encouraged support for Catholic Missions In Canada, the homeless, the lonely, an end to human trafficking, medical assistance in dying, income security in Ontario, vocations and Birthright International. She took part and presented at diocesan development days, in the HUG Project centenary initiative and "soles for souls" to assist the needy. She assisted in promoting parish, diocesan and national events, especially the national theme, Indigenous issues, autism and vocations. She encouraged viewing and/or organized viewing of films Fatal Flaws and Unplanned. One parish council reported having sponsored a refugee family.

Parish presidents reported many challenges. Keeping members engaged, not having a full slate of officers, recruitment, paperwork, time to complete all that was required of a president, lack of training or being undertrained, resistance to new ideas, inexperience, technology, delegation of duties, tedium, meeting expectations and lack of attendance at same, and to a lesser degree, public speaking, member conflict, chairing meetings, lack of confidence and organizational skills were noted. Presidents also noted a lack of interest in accessing program funding, encouragement of the use of awards ceremonies and service pin presentations, using online membership renewal service, improving the education of members, engagement of the spiritual advisor and reporting. While





most parish councils (83% of respondents) liked having a national theme and logo to focus activities on, there were many variations in the length of time each theme should be in place. Stating the challenges gave an excellent opportunity for education and promotion of the needs of provincial councils.

Given the challenges, one would have expected parish councils would be somewhat discouraged. More than 100 pages of comments submitted describing what they were most proud of belies that. This was where they might learn from each other. What one parish council's challenge was may have been overcome by a sister council. Some parish councils were proud of their growth in numbers, engagement and attendance at meetings. All parish councils were proud of the way members stepped up to serve in all capacities within the parish and greater community. While there was much work to do regarding the challenges faced, members could be very optimistic that parish councils were willing and able to continue to work towards personal spiritual growth, and to reach out for assistance in the areas where weaknesses were known and expressed.

Provincial presidents took important initiatives within their council to meet members' needs. These included leadership development, communication including "Find Your Voice" training, and "Mothers of Love and Faith" workshops. Also, a "Warmth and Comfort" project to support a provincial theme of *Homelessness* demonstrated faith in action. One provincial council began a new provincial theme of *Loneliness*, and in every provincial council, efforts were made to educate parish councils on the strategic plan.

To pursue the national theme, I chaired regular meetings of the administrative committee by conference call in order to meet more often, shorten the in-person meeting time and save treasury resources. Four national executive/board meetings were held—winter, pre-convention, post-convention and fall. Two parish council mailings were completed and sent, the only time during the year when national officers

were able to communicate directly with their sisters at the parish level. The focus for year two of the national theme was determined at the fall meeting, to provide financial assistance to a community home in India (see community life annual report for details). A successful 99th annual national convention was held in Calgary, where the speakers focused on an aspect of caring for creation. Plans continued for the celebration of the League's centenary with the invitation of presenters for the 100th anniversary convention. Speakers secured were Dr. Cory Labrecque, Dr. Donna Orsuto and Sr. Nuala Kenny.

As *The Canadian League*, published three times annually, was of such importance to parish councils, the president's message provided a unique opportunity to speak to all members. Monthly "Adventures with Anne" columns were posted on the website and Facebook and provided another opportunity to interface with members directly.

While challenges understandably faced an organization of such size, it was gratifying to know League sisters were so closely connected and generally positive about the future. The parish presidents themselves said it best in their statements:

Members showed "teamwork, [were] supportive, prayerful, considerate, respectful". "Councils work[ed] hard to ensure a good balance of spirituality, education, and fun." [Members] "witness[ed] to the love of God through ministry and service," and members demonstrated "continued passion and dedication to the core purpose and mission" of the organization. "Members [were] supportive, endearing, kind, helpful, cooperative, and the nicest group of women I could work with." With these words, members could be optimistic that with the intercession of Our Lady of Good Counsel and the work of the Holy Spirit, The Catholic Women's League of Canada would continue to be a vital part of the church, Canada, and the world.

Representing Catholic Women

"Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9).

Lending a feminine Catholic voice and presence in matters of faith and justice for the rights of people, the national president or her designate represented the League on the national and international stage at the following events:

- National Conference on Evangelization and Catechesis, April 4-6, 2019, Ottawa, Ontario
- North American Consultation for Women Leaders (Religions for Peace), June 13, 2019, Marriottsville, Maryland
- National Council of Catholic Women Convention, August 20-23, 2019, Atlanta, Georgia
- Federal Forum on Dementia Teleconference, September 19, 2019
- Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Plenary Assembly, September 23-24, 2019, Cornwall, Ontario
- Ukrainian Catholic Women's League of Canada Congress, October 3-6, 2019, Toronto, Ontario
- Canadian Council of Churches Commission on Justice and Peace, November 13, 2019, Ottawa, Ontario

Two issues prompted advocacy by the national president on behalf of the membership in 2019, the Canada Summer Jobs program attestation and the ongoing sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic church.



In January, the national president wrote to the prime minister of Canada and the minister of employment, workplace development and labour to extend appreciation on behalf of its members for the changes made to the attestation requirement of the 2019 Canada Summer Jobs program. Concern had been expressed by the League in a letter dated February 17, 2018 that the attestation infringed on the rights of freedom and conscience enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. A letter was also sent to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) to commend the bishops on their leadership on the matter.

In August, the national president wrote again to the CCCB to commend it for its document entitled Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation and to offer members' assistance with the healing and reconciliation process. The letter represented all members of national council, assembled in convention in Calgary, Alberta.



Advocacy through Resolutions and Legislation

In 2019, two resolutions were added to the list of League priorities, both of which related to Canada honouring its commitment to international issues. The resolutions adopted by national council in convention assembled were:

Resolution 2019.01: Canada to Honour its Commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The League adopted the position that the federal government was duty-bound to honour its legal commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by providing legal protection to children before birth.

Resolution 2019.02: Canadian Support for the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The League adopted the position that the federal government was also dutybound to support, sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In 2019, a change was made to the resolutions process. Resolved clauses only would be presented for debate and adoption to voting and accredited delegates in annual national convention assembled. Previously debated whereas clauses would no longer be published separately, but would be contained within the content of the resolutions brief. The change in process was made to make the debate process more efficient.





As a federal election was called for October 21, 2019, a League delegation was not sent to federal government to present the resolutions adopted. It was anticipated the presentations would be deferred until spring 2020.

Legislation monitored at the federal level prior to dissolution of Parliament included:

- C-45 An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts
- C-48 An Act respecting the regulation of vessels that transport crude oil or persistent oil to or from ports or marine installations located along British Columbia's north coast Intended to formalize a crude oil tanker moratorium on the north coast of British Columbia and set penalties for contravention of this moratorium.
- C-50 An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing)
- C-57 An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act
- C-69 An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts
- C-75 An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and other Acts and to make consequential amendments to other Acts
- C-76 An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and other Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (Elections Modernization Act)
- C-87 An Act respecting the reduction of poverty
- C-211 An Act respecting a federal framework on posttraumatic stress disorder
- S-215 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sentencing for violent offences against Aboriginal women)
- C-233 An Act to respecting a national strategy for Alzheimer's disease and other dementia
- C-243 An Act respecting the development of a national maternity assistance program strategy
- C-255 An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (appeal process for temporary resident visa applicants)
- C-257 An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (sugar content labelling)
- C-262 An Act to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- C-277 An Act providing for the development of a framework on palliative care in Canada

- C-316 An Act to amend the Canada Revenue Agency
 Act (organ donors) Intended to authorize the Canada
 Revenue Agency to enter into an agreement with
 a province or territory regarding the collection and
 disclosure of information required for establishing or
 maintaining an organ and tissue donor registry in the
 province or territory.
- C-326 An Act to amend the Department of Health Act (drinking water guidelines)
- C-332 An Act to provide for reporting on compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- C-336 An Act regarding the right to know when products contain toxic substances
- C-404 An Act to amend the Assisted Human Reproduction Act Intended to decriminalize payment to surrogates and donation of sperm or ovum.
- C-418 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying) Relating to Resolution 2017.04 Protection from Coercion of Conscience for Healthcare Professionals.
- S-228 An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (prohibiting food and beverage marketing directed at children)
- S-240 An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (trafficking in human organs)



National Standing Committee Highlights

▶ Spiritual Development:

Work of the *ad hoc* committee to examine the CCCB document *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation, and Transformation* continued, with recommendations for member and parish council involvement being presented and approved at the national executive's pre-convention meeting. At the annual national convention, national council approved a national day of prayer for Canadian home missions. Parish councils were encouraged to promote this mission work within parishes, dioceses and provinces, particularly for the missions in Canada.

Organization:

Thousands of hours were logged by the implementation committee as it creatively brought life to the strategic plan adopted at the 2018 annual national convention. Three working groups were established to address the most pressing concerns expressed by the membership throughout the two year consultation process, these being to reorganize the League, to market the League, and to provide affirmation and validation to all members. Work began on the three action plans that spanned from 18 months to five years.

Christian Family Life:

The emphasis was on full inclusion in the church and in formation within the standing committee as the annulment process for marriages and vocations took centre stage. A new brochure *Annulments Today—Merciful and Just* became available for purchase by parish councils on this very much misunderstood subject, and it was well received. The process of discernment for the priesthood was expanded in 2018 to include a propaedeutic stage, extending the journey to priesthood by one year. The League's pro-life brochure was also updated.

▶ Community Life:

A victory was won regarding the attestation requirement in the Canada Summer Jobs program, with the federal government modifying the attestation to accommodate the summer labour needs of those organizations that believed in the sanctity of life. However, some organizations were still denied funding in the 2019 program. At the annual national convention, national council approved an annual day of prayer for Christians in the Holy Land. The date set for the first day of prayer was the Feast of the Holy Family on December 29th.

▶ Education and Health:

Spring saw the introduction of the Water Challenge, in keeping with the focus of the national theme. Parish councils were invited to have members pledge to reduce their water consumption by various means and return the pledges to national office. More than 1,900 pledges were received. Other topics promoted were 12 Hours of Prayer for Palliative Care, Canadian Blood Services Partners for Life Program, and many mental and physical health challenges. The national bursary awards criteria were enhanced to make the bursary more accessible for members.

Communications:

The Pornography Hurts postcard campaign was once again promoted, particularly because of its known link to human trafficking. In early summer, the national administrative committee discontinued the toll free telephone number for national office to encourage members and councils to seek answers to common questions locally and follow the communications protocols established by the League hierarchical structure. Many messages were shared about the importance of listening and using affirmative and encouraging language in communications.

Organizational Structure and Statistics



NATIONAL COUNCIL

Provincial Councils

Diocesan Councils

1,176 Parish Councils
74,463 Members

Organizational Renewal

Recognizing the service oriented mission of the organization demands youthful energy and action, and further recognizing a resistance of existing members to take on leadership roles to help the League achieve its mission, the national executive struck a committee to develop a strategic plan to address these and other issues faced by the membership in 2017.

Continuing on with the 18 month plan to research and produce not just a static strategic plan, the steering committee generated 50 strategies to move the League in the direction set in the 17 objectives approved in 2017. These 50 strategies were tested at diocesan and provincial conventions. With the feedback from more than 4,000 members from conventions, the steering committee determined which strategies would have the greatest impact and therefore, should be addressed first over a five year period of implementation.

The success of the strategic plan depends on a depth of planning and effectiveness in implementation. Chosen leaders Lisa Henry of North Bay, Ontario, Sr. Susan Scott of Stony Plain, Alberta, Life Member Jacqueline Nogier of Snow Lake, Manitoba, and Sharon Ciebin of Coquitlam, British Columbia, began the implementation phase in earnest in 2019, having spent 2018 becoming familiar with the strategic plan and approved process.

The first priorities, as determined through consultation with members, were the following strategies:

- Include (leave no member behind) and affirm (make members feel welcomed, needed and wanted)
- 2. Validate all members
- Increase awareness about the League within the church through marketing
- Market the League as an association that showcases the strength of Catholic women grounded in faith ready and willing to act
- Position the League as an organization for all Catholic women that encourages and supports their role and responsibility in the church and society

- Transform name, brand and image to reflect current trends and the envisioned future
- Reduce the number of standing committees to three to align with the core values of faith, service and social justice
- 8. Streamline executive officers at all levels and create distinctive roles for each level
- 9. Examine the current levels of the League
- 10. Simplify procedures and reporting processes
- Enhance the role of the standing committee chairpersons from a reporting role to rotating the meeting program among them
- 12. Reorganize

The strategies were combined into three working groups—Affirmation (1 and 2), Marketing (3-6) and Reorganization (7-12). General plans for the three groups, along with budgetary implications, were approved by the national executive at its winter meeting. Working group volunteers were solicited, detailed action plans determined by the groups, and implementation began in earnest. More than 3,000 hours were logged by the implementation committee and three working groups, with efforts primarily focused on gathering research for evidenced-based decision making. Members were anxious to see the outcome of the first working group, scheduled for August 2020.





Eleven members were recognized for their extraordinary leadership in the League, when they received the second highest honour the League has to offer, life membership. They are:

Shirley Christo Brampton, Ontario

A. Chantal Devine Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Marie-Theresa Lamphier Windsor, Ontario

Linda McClinton Prince George, British Columbia

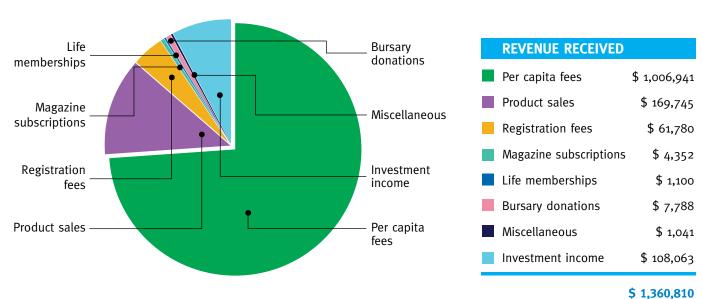
Susan Melchiorre Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Margaret Schwab Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Ruby Sharpe St. John's, Newfoundland

and Labrador

Ana Sousa Cambridge, Ontario
Barbara Thuen Winnipeg, Manitoba
Anna Tremblay North Bay, Ontario
Anne Vincelli Cornwall, Ontario

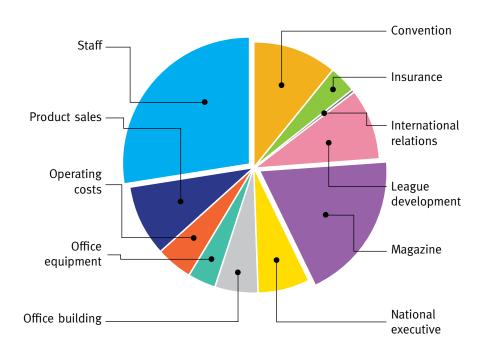
Sixteen members were added to the rolls of Bellelle Guerin award recipients, bringing the total to 207 members or 0.3% of the membership. An additional 223 members received a maple leaf service pin, bringing the total to 3,495 members or 4.7% of the membership.

Financial Information



\$ 1,500,610

EXPENDITURES	
Convention	\$ 136,290
Insurance	\$ 43,594
International relations	\$ 3,876
League development	\$ 115,888
Magazine	\$ 233,295
National executive	\$ 84,792
Office building	\$ 66,834
Office equipment	\$ 45,914
Operating costs	\$ 59,790
Product sales	\$ 113,968
Staff	\$ 338,569



\$ 1,242,810





The Catholic Women's League of Canada

C-702 Scotland Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3M 1X5

Tel: (204) 927-2310 Website: cwl.ca E-mail: info@cwl.ca