



Ontario Provincial Council  
Of The Catholic Women's League of Canada  
Education and Health Standing Committee

Directive #7

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To: Diocesan Education and Health Committee Chairpersons  
From: Wilma Vanderzwaag, Ontario Provincial Council, Education and Health Standing Committee Chairperson, Sub Committee Chairs: Mary Lou Watson and Heather Sisk  
cc: Diocesan Presidents, Provincial Officers, National Health and Education Standing Committee Chairperson

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*The best way to heal a broken heart is to give God all the pieces.*

### **Environment-**

Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Dianne Saxe released her report and advised that more work is needed if Ontario wants to meet its long-term goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The cap-and-trade system brought in approximately \$2 billion dollars last year. These funds are to be spent on green projects and \$1.37 billion as of last November met the established criteria for green projects. She also stated that the long-term energy plan announced by the Ministry of Energy is "incompatible" with the province's climate change law.

### **Health-**

Communique 08 from National Education and Health Chair, Fran Lucas deals with promoting mental health through our lifespan. The mid-life years are featured in this communique with many things that can help us to have resilience to life's challenges. Two of the ten listed speak volumes. First, having a set of core beliefs that very few things could shatter and second, find a resilient role model. Being a member of The Catholic Women's League of Canada gives us the opportunity to realize both desired objectives. Read the communique on the National Website to get the rest of the listed objectives.

A CBC report dated January 18, 2018 reported that in Ontario, staff-to-resident abuse in long-term care homes was up 148% from 2011. The television show Marketplace, investigated and found an average of 6 seniors are abused by their caregiver every day. Marketplace compiled 6 years of data from Ontario's long-term care facilities, including critical incidents involving abuse and neglect that each home reports to the government. The number of incidents was compared with the number of licensed beds in each home to calculate a rate of abuse. This information is part of Marketplace's year-long investigation, Crying Out for Care. Let us all ask the candidates running in the provincial election what do they plan to do to stop this horrible abuse.

In my last directive, I asked that we pray for those affected by the opioid crisis and for working the front lines of this crisis. A new report states that in Ontario the highest per capita of overdoses going to the emergency department in hospitals is in Sault Ste. Marie. Important steps have begun in addressing this crisis, please continue with support and prayers.

Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute has made available in video Dr. Andrew Bennett's lecture, *Restoring Human Dignity: The Martyrdom of Public Faith*. The video is available on the CCBI's website, [www.ccbi-utoronto.ca](http://www.ccbi-utoronto.ca).

Dr. Moira McQueen's message for the World Day of the Sick is attached to this directive.

The United Kingdom has appointed a new minister—a Minister of Loneliness to tackle social isolation. Social isolation can have serious repercussions, including impacts on a person's mental health and mortality. Loneliness and isolation are particularly acute among seniors over the age of 80 who experience additional challenges like the death of a spouse. Loneliness can impair health by raising levels of stress hormones and inflammation, which in turn can increase the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and even suicide attempts. Dr. Holt-Lunstad from Brigham Young University also pointed out that older adults should not be the sole focus of the effects of loneliness and social isolation. Dr. Holt-Lunstad along with colleagues have analyzed 70 studies encompassing 3.3 million people stated that the prevalence of loneliness peaks in adolescents and young adults, then again in the oldest old. Andrew Wister, Director of Gerontology Research Centre at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, said studies have found about one in five Canadians experience some degree of loneliness or social isolation. Reconnecting people with their communities can change lives by improving the health and well-being of individuals—what can we do to help?

Ontario Call for Conscience Campaign-Feb. 1-March 31, 2018. All members are asked to participate in this initiative by the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario. Go on the website [CanadiansforConscience.ca/Ontario](http://CanadiansforConscience.ca/Ontario), write a letter to all the local candidates in the upcoming Ontario provincial election. Remember when writing letters, you are acting in your personal capacity. Encourage fellow parishioners to write as well. A helpful video can be found at <http://youtu.be/rgNLt6W-ww0>.

### **Education-**

The STEAM Academy located in Brantford, Ontario at the Six Nations Polytechnic receives praise in its pilot year. The academy combines Ontario Secondary School and Ontario College curriculums across the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. The students enroll in Grade 9 and can begin taking college-level courses as early as Grade 10. In five to six years, students graduate with both an Ontario Secondary School diploma as well as an Ontario College diploma. The academy is open to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The curriculum combines traditional Indigenous knowledge with classes that meet educational standards across the province.

Remember to speak to your local candidates for the upcoming provincial election about the importance of Catholic Education and find out if they are a supporter of Catholic Education.

Blessings,  
*Wilma*

# World Day of the Sick

Sunday, February 11, 2018

In his Message for this year's World Day of the Sick, Pope Francis looks to the Cross of Christ for redemption from suffering and to Mary as Mother of the Church, a mother who looks out for all her children. The Pope's example of practical accompaniment of the sick, the dying and the elderly is shown in his frequent visits to hospitals, seniors' homes and in his loving attention to the sick and people with disabilities who come to his weekly audiences. Accompanying and encountering the sick are watchwords of his ministry of mercy, and an example of how Mary looks after her children. We, too, can support the sick through many different organizations and in many varied ways:

- We can work politically to ensure that our health care and social service systems will focus on not only direct medical services, but will also strive to improve the social determinants of health.
- In order to optimize infant and child healthcare and to be intentional about disease prevention as life begins, we can make political demands in their interests.
- We can also support the claims of those employed in health care and social services who are overworked or underpaid.
- From the Catholic viewpoint of improving the common good, we must ask whether our national budgetary provisions for health care are sufficient? If not, are those who are more financially secure willing to pay more so that others may benefit, beyond accepting an already somewhat heavy tax burden?

We are becoming more aware of regional injustices, even at the level of not having clean water available – in Canada! In 2018! We know this need not be, so we are challenged to respond.

- Some will be called to take political and social action to improve our health systems on behalf of the sick, as above.
- Some are called to be of great practical assistance to the sick, the frail and the elderly. volunteering in hospices, in hospitals and long term care homes.
- Some participate in athletic and other events to raise awareness for specific charities and causes, at the same time persuading other people to support those causes financially.
- Many people are involved professionally in responding to the needs of the poor, the homeless, the elderly, those with addictions and so on, and many give their time and talents in other ways—financially, personally and spiritually through donating, volunteering, praying and raising awareness through their personal witness and commitment.

At an international level, Canada contributes large amounts in government aid to many countries and organizations, and many of us do so in a smaller way, through financial support of organizations that help medically and socially.

- Instead of birthday gifts, we can ask for a well (or part of one!) to be built in a developing country; we can 'send' friends some goats, pigs or chickens—redirected, of course, to a family who will benefit directly from them.

- We can send medical supplies and educational materials through organizations such as *Chalice*, based in Nova Scotia, while many hospitals such as St Josephs in Hamilton send medical teams with suitable supplies to help in countries in need, in this case, Haiti.

We can be inspired by many local examples of accompanying and encountering the sick in the spirit of Pope Francis. Here are a few examples that have struck me recently:

- In the Archdiocese of Quebec, teams of two are going out to visit the sick, the lonely and the vulnerable—all people who need our special care and attention, even more so in today's world.
- I have a priest friend who started to visit the psychiatric ward of a local hospital, making himself available for conversation to anyone who would like to chat. Being 'listened to' is a great gift, and another form of accompanying the sick.
- I just heard recently from two sisters I know who have left their full time careers to look after their other sister with early signs of dementia, in order to keep her at home in her own surroundings and involved in family life as long as possible.
- We all know parish nurses who look after the elderly, the housebound and the sick in their local areas and who include prayer, a spiritual dimension and parish 'talk' in their visits, which many homebound people miss.

I am sure there are countless examples we can all give of how we accompany and encounter the sick, and Pope Francis reminds us that the prime example is Mary. She stood at the foot of the Cross, sorrowing no doubt, but she was THERE, accompanying Jesus to the end. Aware of this, it is natural that we should turn to her for encouragement in our accompanying and encountering those who need it support!

Mary, Help of the Sick, pray for us!

Moira McQueen, LLB MDiv, PhD  
Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute