



THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF CANADA  
Ottawa Diocesan Council  
RESOLUTIONS AND LEGISLATION

*Care for our Common Home*



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COMMUNIQUE #6

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TO: Parish Resolutions and Legislation Chairpersons

From: Lynn Lavictoire, Diocesan Resolutions and Legislation Chairperson (acting)

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At the beginning of this year, the threat and rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic caught most of us unprepared for what was to come. Since that initial shock, we have slowly adjusted. A limited taste of normalcy has returned through the allowance of family gatherings and limited reopening of businesses, restaurants, sports, entertainment and our parishes. We are still far from the freedom we once had. It has been a story paralleled by the CWL where virtually everything came to a standstill. There have been signs of life as councils have reached out using the telephone and online resources, but the League is nowhere close to where it needs to be to function effectively as an organization. It begs the question: how did the League get here and how can we move into the future?

The core rules of the CWL is defined by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (RONR)* and the *Constitution and Bylaws (C&B)*. Together they form the basic structure of the League on which everything else is built. *Robert's Rules* are a set of parliamentary rules widely adopted by organizations across North America including the Canadian Government. These rules were developed over one hundred and fifty years motivated by the goal of carrying out the business of an assembly of people smoothly and efficiently while protecting the rights of individuals and groups of people in the assembly. What distinguishes the CWL from other organizations using *Robert's Rules* is the League's *C&B* which customizes the rules specifically for the needs of the CWL.

Although following the rules and procedures of the League can sometimes seem onerous, the current system has served the League remarkably well over the last one hundred years. There are also provisions in the *C&B* to allow the rules to be amended so they can adapt to the times. Any amendments to the *C&B* require a two-thirds vote at a national convention. The last time any changes were made to the *C&B* was in 2013.

Unfortunately, the *C&B*, which is central to the way business is done in the League, has now created a roadblock. The problem is that all voting decisions must be done in person. There is no provision for online voting. Consequently, when provincial governments across Canada implemented shutdowns, the League had no choice but cancel business meetings at all levels including conventions. Until government guidelines change to allow large meetings, the CWL remains in pause mode.

Since the pandemic looks like it will be around for a while longer, it would be beneficial to get League business started again by changing the rules to allow online voting. However, in order to change the *C&B*, we need to be able to vote in person! The only way around this is to make the changes without an in-person vote (but possibly supported by an online vote) and then ratify the changes later at a national convention when we can finally meet in person. So far, the national executive has not made this decision.

Eventually the pandemic will end and things will return to normal. What the pandemic will have taught us is that we are not immune to a future pandemic. Given this appreciation, many members are wondering about how we can be better prepared for the future. The most obvious solution is to amend the *C&B* to allow the

business of the League to be carried out even when the members are not able to physically meet. This raises the question: who can make those amendments and how is it done?

The process of amending the *C&B* is different from the process of introducing a new resolution (an amendment modifies something that exists while a resolution introduces something new). There are, however many similarities in these processes in terms of the way approval is obtained from the parish level to the national level. The details of the amendment process are described in the *C&B* (Part XX, p. 46) and in the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure (P&P)* (Section 11, p. 151). The process begins with any member of the League. For example, a member of a parish council could develop a proposed amendment to the *C&B*. This is submitted to a regular parish council meeting using the official amendment [form](#) (found on the national website). If accepted by a two-thirds vote, the form is signed by the parish president and secretary then submitted to the diocesan president.

At the diocesan level, the amendment is introduced and voted on at the next diocesan convention. If the amendment is accepted by a two-thirds vote, the president and secretary sign the amendment form and then passed it on to the provincial president where a similar sequence is followed. If the amendment is again accepted by a two-thirds vote, the form is signed as before and then passed on to the National Chairperson of Laws before the deadline of August 31.

At this point, the amendment has been approved at a parish council meeting, a diocesan convention and a provincial convention which can all take place in a few months. However, at the national level, the amendment is not introduced at the next national convention but the convention in the year following. During this time, the amendment is considered by the National Amendments Committee who recommend whether it should be approved or rejected before passing it on to the national executive.

If the national executive approves the proposed amendment (two-thirds vote), a notice of the proposed amendment is circulated to all councils at least six months before the annual national convention. At the national convention, two-thirds of the instructed vote is required for approval the amendment. This is not the final approval however. Before coming into effect, the approval of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) is also required. This is a two-year process so that an amendment to the *C&B* proposed today (fall of 2020) will not be implemented until 2022.

The other League document of major importance is the *National Manual of Policy and Procedure (P&P)*. This manual is a complement to the *C&B* providing more detail on the processes and procedures guiding the League. Amendments to the *P&P* follow a simpler process which is also described in the *P&P* (Section 11, p. 155). The amendment [form](#) (found on the national website) in this case can be submitted directly to national with a submission deadline of December 31 in order to be considered at the next national convention. Amending the *P&P* is a much shorter and simpler process than amending the *C&B* except when the proposed amendment contravenes the *C&B*. In this case, the *C&B* will need to be amended first before the *P&P* can be amended.

There is little doubt that proposed amendments to the *C&B* will be introduced by members (maybe even one of us) as a consequence of the current pandemic. Given our experiences, this is an opportunity to appreciate what needs to change as well as how the process of change works and then get involved. Even if we are not intimately involved in the change process, we will all be called to make a decision so it is good to be informed!

*Be content to progress in slow steps until you have legs to run and wings with which to fly.*

*-St. Pius of Pietrelcina*