

Madam President& Sisters in the League:

Education and Health continue to be areas of interest and concern for our membership.

Poster/Essay Contest:

Our 22nd Annual Poster/Poem/Story/Essay Contest is in full swing. We hope that students and their teachers are inspired by this year’s theme derived from our new CWL National Theme which is “Inspired by the Spirit, Women Respond to God’s Call”. For students in Kindergarten thru Grade 6 the theme will be “Where do I see God’s Spirit?” For students in Grades 7 thru 12 the theme will be “How does the Holy Spirit inspire me in serving others?”

Last year over eleven hundred entries were received from numerous schools throughout the diocese. Thank you to all who embraced this project and worked with their schools. Winners will be announced at our convention in April. With the presentations taking place on the Sunday. As has been done in recent years, the student’s posters and written entries will be sent to extended care centers in the towns and cities from which entries are received.

Instructions and an official entry form for this year’s contest are posted on the Diocesan website. Please note that the deadline for submissions is March 17, 2017. I would ask that if your council is doing a contest as well, please use paper clips… as the number of staples that some use makes it extremely difficult to remove the entry sheet and keep the art work intact. Also, if we could also ask that you keep your entries in the groups that they will be judged. For example, grades 1 and 2 should not be mixed with the 5 and 6’s as with the number of entries we receive it is very time consuming to separate them.

We look forward to receiving submissions from your schools in your community.

Health

What are you ladies doing on “January 25?” Help end the stigma around mental illness. It’s easier than you think! For my sisters and friends that have Facebook… or have a cell phone you can text… or if you are on twitter than tweet! #letstalk…This year Bell’s Let’s Talk Day will be on January 25, every time you talk, text and join in on social media on January 25, Bell will donate 5¢ to mental health initiatives. Last year they raised significant funds for this initiative.

It’s a fact, one in five Canadians will suffer from mental illness at some point in their lifetime. One of the biggest hurdles for anyone suffering from mental illness is overcoming the stigma. It is the number one reason why two-thirds of those living with a mental illness do not seek help.

One of the benefactors of this campaign is the KIDS HELP PHONE. I have more information at my booth on mental health of young people.

Update on Medically Assisted Dying

Sixty Albertans have received medical aid to end their lives this year, as demand for the service continues to grow across much the province. Statistics released Monday December 12 by Alberta Health Services show the number of assisted deaths has essentially doubled in the past two months,

Instead of tapering off following an initial surge of interest, demand appears to have grown stronger through the fall and into the start of the holiday season — months after new federal legislation came into effect. The statistics show 90 per cent of the deaths have taken place since June 17, when the new federal law removed the need to obtain a court order to receive the service.

Alberta had been averaging two to four deaths per week from June to September, but that rate has since gone up to about three to five per week.

In addition to the procedures that have been performed, 28 other requests for medical aid in dying have been rejected because the patients did not meet one or more legal criteria. Common reasons why people are deemed ineligible include a having a mental health diagnosis, a loss of capacity or competency, or failing to have a condition where death is “reasonably foreseeable,”

AHS has also been struggling to find additional doctors willing to assist in a patient’s death. An initial survey of physicians earlier this year found 150 or more who said they would be willing to provide the service, but far fewer have come forward. AHS plans to send a new survey to doctors early in the new year, in part to gauge the reasons for a physicians’ reluctance to participate. The survey canvasses what role would they be prepared to play… ‘Would you be willing to be a consultant, or an assessor? Or would you be willing to be a provider?’”

AHS will also reach out to Alberta’s 450 nurse practitioners, after they received cabinet approval last week to provide medical aid in dying. Alberta’s Associate Health Minister Brandy Payne said the approval should provide additional options for people wanting the service, particularly patients in rural and remote areas of Alberta who may not have regular access to a doctor.

Close to half of Alberta’s assisted deaths (28) have occurred in the Edmonton zone.

Cancer, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and multiple sclerosis are the three most commonly cited conditions among the patients who have received the service.

As of the end of November, six patients requesting medical aid in dying have been transferred to AHS care from another health agency, such as Covenant Health. Here’s what the numbers look like.

By the Numbers: Medical Aid in Dying in Alberta

60: Total deaths that have taken place in 2016.

28: Deaths in the Edmonton zone.

19: Deaths in the Calgary and central zones.

8: Deaths in the south zone.

5: Deaths in the north zone.

6: Deaths that occurred between Feb. 6 and June 17, when a court order had to be obtained.

41: Deaths that have taken place in a facility.

19: Deaths that have taken place in the community, including at home.

70: Average age of people who received the service in Edmonton

**Bill C-268 Protection of Freedom of Conscience Act.** As Catholics, we continue to pray and send communications to our government representatives in support of amending “the Criminal code to make it an offence to intimidate a medical nurse or nurse practitioner, pharmacist or any other healthcare professional for the purpose of compelling them to take part, directly or indirectly, in the provision of medical assistance in dying. It also makes it an offence to dismiss from employment or to refuse to employ a medical or nurse practitioner, pharmacist or any other healthcare professional for the reason only that they refuse to take part, directly or indirectly, in the provision of medical assistance in dying.” A link providing the status of this private member’s bill will be posted under my tab on the website.

[Bill C-268 Protection of Freedom of Conscience Act](http://news.gc.ca/web/articleen.do;jsessionid=88d4f1d2cea57d2fca996e184aaa9d46eb06faa2f3eb5ffd85729a6b5fc0efee.e38RbhaLb3qNe3eNbhb0?mthd=index&crtr.page=1&nid=1169379)

This concludes my report. Are there any questions?