Good afternoon. I am excited to bring you up to date on the activities and work that has been undertaken on your behalf in an effort to plan strategically for the future of the League. The process involved knowledge-based decision-making to align League activities with the core purpose, values and goals members have for the future. I will share with you highlights from the **Report of the Steering Committee to the attendees** at National Convention 2018.

**Slide 2:**

The national executive, in its role as board of directors, recognized there had to be a plan. This meant taking some first steps to planning strategically, including taking a look at new ways of decision making.

The board is responsible for setting direction. A new way of doing business meant putting critical issues facing councils and members at the forefront of every agenda. Annual operation planning and then routine business would take place afterwards.

Upon recognizing that planning strategically would require an investment in time and talent, the national president, president-elect and past president, along with the executive director, began a pre-planning phase to guide the efforts of the board. This included how long the effort would take, who would participate and when, and identifying the current conditions and challenges that needed to be faced. These initial considerations were captured in a terms of reference for a steering committee.

Professional services were engaged to provide guidance and facilitate some of the initial sessions and workshops.

By August 2018, the steering committee was to present a five-year plan that encompassed all levels of the League, a proposed terms of reference for an implementation committee and a proposed process for periodic monitoring, evaluating and updating of the plan. This is a critical component to ensure that planning strategically would become a process, not a document that could be filed and forgotten.

A cross-country town hall was held as part of the 97th annual national convention in Charlottetown. The town hall allowed members to share their views in six areas:

1. What makes you proud to be a member
2. What should the League emphasize and promote
3. The biggest change, challenge or opportunity facing the League
4. What you’d like to see the League do differently
5. What you’d like to see the League stop doing
6. What the future of the League looks like to you.

The results were overwhelming in confirming the environment under which parish councils were operating.

The steering committee then turned its attention to the future.

The first step in planning for the future was to assess if the League was still relevant in today’s church and society. The answer, of course, was a resounding YES! Yes, the League has a place today, perhaps even more so than ever before!

Once this most important question was answered, the steering committee and the board turned its attention to articulating three core guiding principles - what the League is, what values it holds and what its mission is. In an exercise that lasted two days prior to convention last year, consultant Donna Dunn led the board and steering committee in a workshop to reflect on and articulate these guiding principles.

I’m pleased to share these four guiding principles with you now. They were thoroughly examined by 196 members who serve at the provincial level across Canada. Feedback was taken and the principles reworked to come to a consensus among national, provincial and diocesan levels:

**Slide 3:**

***Core Purpose***: Why does the League exist? What activities should it undertake?

The League exists to unite Catholic women to grow in faith, and to promote social justice through service to the church, Canada and the world.

***Core Values***: What fundamental beliefs dictate the behaviour of all members in the pursuit of the League’s purpose? What are the enduring truths about what the League stands for?

Firstly – FAITH – following Catholic teaching

Secondly – SERVICE – local, national and international in scope

Finally – SOCIAL JUSTICE – active involvement in society

***Mission Statement***: What is the scope of the League’s operations and how is it accomplished? The mission statement we all know and love is still relevant, but the wording has been modernized. It now reads:

***“The Catholic Women’s League of Canada calls its members to grow in faith and to witness to the love of God through ministry and service”***

***Envisioned Future***: What does the League strive to become?

The Catholic Women’s League of Canada is an inclusive and engaged community of Catholic women inspired by faith. It is:

* A vital participant in the church
* A valued partner for social justice
* A respected advocate at all government levels
* Connected to the world.

**Slide 4:**

Goals and objectives of an organization change as the environment in which the organization operates changes and as the goals and objectives are met. This type of planning process is called a “goals approach”.

At the same intensive workshop led by Donna Dunn held in August 2017, the board and the steering committee formulated three goals and determined a set of objectives as a means to accomplish each individual goal. Consultation followed with all provincial executives for further input. Then, the steering committee met to assess the input and revise the goals and objectives to meet the needs of provincial and diocesan representatives.

**Goal 1:** Members of The Catholic Women’s League of Canada grow in faith by sharing, witnessing, and developing leadership skills to create positive change.

**Goal 2:** The Catholic Women’s League of Canada addresses and supports Catholic social teaching through advocacy.

**Goal 3:** Through outreach and service, members of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada foster a culture where all life is valued with dignity and respect.

The town hall session held last August identified critical issues that need to be addressed – or “critical issues approach”. Using these two approaches (i.e. goals and critical issues) caused some overlap but ensures that major stumbling blocks are addressed.

**Slide 5**

Critical issues are fundamental policy or program concerns that define the most important situations and choices faced by an organization.

The steering committee heard from members these critical issues need to be addressed.

* Provide valid options in structure and meetings
* Address the lack of participation and engagement, disparity in engagement levels and competition for members and prospective members’ time
* Address the perception of the League, its marketing and promotion
* Address the lack of training of members and the resistance to taking on leadership roles
* Improve the use of technology, communication methods and tools

The three goals, objectives and list of critical issues were approved in principle by the board at the fall 2017 mid-term meeting.

**Slide 6**

Once they had guiding principles, goals to achieve the envisioned future, and objectives established to measure progress, the steering committee moved to developing strategies that would achieve the goals and thereby move the League closer to the envisioned future.

A strategy defines how an organization will commit its resources to accomplish its goals. It lays the framework for action plans that explain the how, what, when and where of using scarce resources to achieve goals. It eliminates time spent on activities that do not move the organization toward its goal. It provides focus.

In November 2017, a call was sent out through all channels. Members with an interest in strategic planning were asked to step forward and commit to participating in strategy sessions in one of seven sub-committees, each lead by a steering committee member.

There were 17 objectives that required strategies. For each objective, there was a brainstorming session to come up with strategies. For each of the proposed strategies, the sub-committee examined and selected those with the highest probability of success. The questions asked? Was the strategy necessary to achieve progress? Was the strategy feasible, that is, could it be effectively executed? Was the strategy appropriate, consistent with the core purpose and values? The strategies that made the “short list” were then examined one last time. If the strategies were all taken together, would they be sufficient to achieve the objective?

By February 2018, the sub-committees had formed 50 strategies. These were taken to the board for approval in principle, and then shared at 44 diocesan and provincial conventions in a workshop. More than 4,000 members at every level took part in these workshops and formed what is about to be presented.

The strategies are a direct result of last year’s town hall consultations. They represent the wants and needs of the membership as shared by the participants. They are important; they represent the obstacles to growth faced by councils. How these strategies get implemented will be up to the implementation team and will be worked on over the next five years.

**Slide 7:**

At the pre-convention board meeting, the revised goals, objectives and strategies were presented for approval. This followed many consultations as you have already been advised today. The result was resounding acceptance.

The efforts of so many have produced a ***frame of reference*** for what needs to be accomplished. A copy was provided to each National Convention attendee and each Parish President will receive a copy in the National Fall Mail out (coming soon if not already received). You will receive a few pages from this frame of reference at the end of this presentation.

The next step is the formation of an implementation committee that will be charged with making the goals a reality. Deadline to apply is tomorrow. The steering committee produced a Terms of Reference (TOR) for the implementation committee which was presented to the board and was approved.

The TOR set out how the committee will be organized, the manner in which members of the committee will be selected and the composition of the working groups under each committee lead. In short, the committee will be composed of seven members: one from the national board, four appointed via an application process, and two members of the disbanded steering committee. Each of the four appointees will lead one of the goals or critical issues facing the League. A chairperson will be selected by the implementation committee once formed. The committee will become active immediately upon selection and will dissolve upon full implementation of the strategic plan or March 31, 2023, whichever comes first.

The implementation committee will report to the national board and oversee the strategies accepted by the board. Annual budgets will be submitted for consideration by the board, which when approved will provide internal control through spending limits.

The steering committee has worked diligently to outline what will be done in the next five years to assure a continued and more vibrant national organization. The implementation committee will choose how the strategies will come alive for all parishes.

Thank you for your support of the steering committee. And thank you in advance for assisting the implementation committee as it seeks to renew and refresh The Catholic Women’s League of Canada.