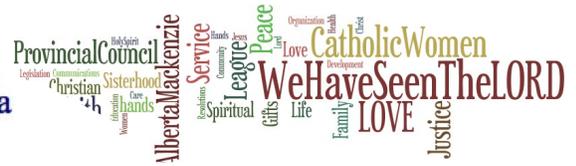




The Catholic Women's League of Canada
ALBERTA MACKENZIE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL



Independent Seniors' Advocate

Provincial Initiative

“Urge the Alberta Provincial Government to amend the Alberta Health Act to ensure that the Seniors' Advocate is an Officer of the Legislature and therefore independent”

Parish Council Presidents and Sisters in the League:

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

At the CWL Provincial Convention executive meeting June 5th, 2014 the provincial **executive** approved the Independent Seniors' Advocate provincial initiative for presentation at the 2014 Convention June 6-7. This initiative is to encourage all CWL members across Alberta to urge their own MLA through an informal petition to amend the Alberta Health Act to ensure that the Seniors' Advocate is an Officer of the Legislature and therefore independent.

The Independent Seniors' Advocate Office needs to be an independent voice free from political interference with the ability to identify systemic issues and areas of care where vulnerable seniors are at risk and hold the government responsible for the services it provides. It would be modeled on the Independent Child and Youth Advocate Office.

To this end, we were asking all members of the League to circulate in October an informal petition within their own constituencies, hoping that the members will reach out to neighbours and friends explaining to them the need for an independent seniors' advocate. Presently, the advocate is housed in the Health Care Advocate's Office and accountable to the Minister of Health. These petitions would have been presented to the members own MLA in November making them aware of the wishes of their constituents with regard to an independent seniors' advocate.

Update ...Update...Update...Update...Update...Update

The process was put on hold with the new premier setting up a Seniors Ministry as well as Wildrose members crossing the floor. After much examination and review of the mandate of the new ministry it was concluded that the need for an independent advocate is even greater as seniors now have to navigate through two ministries - Health and Seniors - to help them with their concerns. As well there does not appear to be a vehicle for accountability for recommendations being made by the Seniors' Advocate. A

very current example is the Philips LifeLine Cord. "**Philips recalls Lifelines after Alberta judge urges replacement : Early version of medical alert necklace equipped with a non-breakaway cord.**" (CBC NEWS posted Feb. 20, 2015.) The cord was deemed unsafe in 2009 and only now is the product being recalled. An Independent Seniors' Advocate could have requested a recall in 2009. Another example is the sprinklers systems in care facilities. "**While all new care facilities built in Canada since 1997 are required to have fire sprinklers and meet fire safety codes, no province has yet mandated immediate retrofitting of sprinklers in homes built prior to 1997, despite the fact that sprinklers reduce the risk of fire-related deaths and injuries by over 80% compared to homes which do not have sprinklers, according to the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (CAFC).**" (CARP.ca Feb. 13, 2015) The Premier in his mandate letter to Jeff Johnson, Minister of Seniors, says "Address the fire code and safety issues surrounding existing seniors accommodations in Alberta." (Ministry of Seniors website <www.seniors.alberta.ca>). Only now is this issue beginning to be addressed.

This is not a formal petition and there is **no expectation** it will be tabled in the legislature. We want to inform our individual MLAs of the wishes of their constituents. We hope the MLAs themselves will bring the issue forward. This is an opportune time for us as it seems the province is getting ready for an election. If you are aware of any candidates from the other political parties in your constituency please inform them as well on our position. Please let them know the wishes of their future constituents . As well, encourage your members to write to their MLA informing them of their wishes. Our understanding is that when an MLA receives 50 letters on an issue, they take it seriously.

Attached is the process for the initiative along with the petition which also can be found on the provincial website under Provincial Initiative - Independent Seniors' Advocate.

Our success will be determined by the following actions:

- Invoking our Lady of Good Counsel to guide our initiative.
- Praying to the Holy Spirit for the courage to get involved.
- Praying to the Holy Spirit to gives us the words we need to speak our MLA.
- **All councils** involvement
- We remember that everything we do is to be for the honour and glory of the Father.

Judy L.

CWL ABMK Provincial Council
Education & Health Standing Committee Chair