

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

May 2023

From the Chair...

It is now widely acknowledged that the lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic were vastly more harmful than any help they provided. Recent studies from around the globe have confirmed the fact that jurisdictions which didn't lock down or locked down only minimally have come out of the pandemic with more robust economies and better health, especially among the young, than those which chose to lockdown schools, churches, homes, and businesses. I am concerned that one of the holdover effects of the lockdown mentality is a reluctance to return to in-person meetings both with our fellow Vincentians and our Neighbours in Need.

We, human beings, are social animals. We are hard-wired to find social interactions a rewarding experience. Face to face interactions provide a better opportunity for real and valuable engagement. Communication is more effective when done face-to-face because you can read body language, tone, feelings, and reactions more accurately. Studies show that 55% of the impact of our communication comes from body language, and just 38% from tone of voice and only 7% from words themselves. The great wit, George Bernard Shaw, once quipped that the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place. Communication not done in person only exacerbates the problem.

It's a lot less tempting to check your email or the latest Twitter post or Tik Tok video when sitting in the same room, across a table from someone than it is when you can mute your microphone and turn off your camera during an on-line session. Active listening, a skill in which we, as Vincentians, should certainly be engaging, is a lot easier in person. As our founder wrote in 1848, "Help honors when, to the bread that nourishes, it adds the visit that consoles, the advice that enlightens, the friendly shake of the hand that lifts up sinking courage; when it treats the poor man with respect. . ." Those are difficult things to accomplish in a virtual world.

In the context of our Conference or Council meetings, we should be mindful of the power of social contact. It can help improve our memory formation and recall, it can help make you laugh and often provide a more positive outlook as well as meeting important human needs like friendship and a sense of belonging. Social isolation has been proven to be on a par with high blood pressure, obesity, lack of exercise or smoking as a risk factor for illness and early death. Socialization and the ensuing ability to work cooperatively together is one of the things that puts us, as humans, on the top of the food chain. As an organization we have experienced the power of a few people working in concert and at every meeting we reflect on the words of our Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." There's something lost in the translation if we say, "Where two or three log in to Zoom at the same time".

Technology can be a wonderful thing and we need to embrace the positive effects it can offer. It's safer and warmer to dial in to a meeting in mid-January than to brave the roads and elements. And it could be argued that even a virtual meeting is better than no meeting at all. But only the mediocre are always at their best and I hope we aspire to more than mediocrity. So, I encourage all of us, to work towards the greatest possible return to the social interactions of in-person meetings both with Neighbours and in our Conferences and Councils; after all, it's the way God made us.

- Bro. Gary Valcour, Chair

Camp News!

By now, Conferences have received their registration packages for both Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam. If you have not, please contact the office right away. Signing up campers for the camps is one of the most rewarding works you can do as a Vincentian and the children have been relying on you since 1962! Every child deserves a chance to experience the wonders of camping, it's good for the child, and good for the family. Please continue to register children until you hear that we are full for the season.

Marygrove Camp Collection – June 10 and 11th

All the funding for Marygrove Camp comes from the annual camp collection held in the parishes throughout the Archdiocese. Please take a few minutes to ensure its success – the camp needs the funding so that the children can enjoy their summer adventure. We have proof that a Conference can double or even triple the collection by doing the following:

- ✓ Touch base with your parish office to make sure there are camp envelopes for the collection, we know there are often the envelopes in the collection boxes, but some parishes distribute them as well.
- ✓ Ask to have the collection promoted in the bulletin
- ✓ Offer to speak at the masses, a few words about the Society and our impactful outreach to our Neighbours in Need always elicits a positive response.

Rake-A-Thon Thanks!

To the Vincentians, staff, residents and friends who joined us on May 6th, we are grateful for all your efforts. It was one of the few sunny days sandwiched in between days and days of rain. The sun shone down, the rakers got busy, and thanks to the efforts of our volunteers, the camp is ready for the children. We hope to see you, and your friends next year, because as surely as this world keeps spinning, the leaves will once again, be on the ground, and we will always need your help!

GTCC Annual General Meeting - September 23, 2023

Our Annual General Meeting and learning day will be on Saturday, September 23rd, please save the date, and watch for further details. We are returning to our format of workshops, meeting, and celebrating mass together.

National Council of Canada Elections

Election: Conference Presidents and Particular Council Presidents are eligible to vote for the National Council President. You may have been asked to provide your email address to the National Council as the vote will be conducted electronically. Please check their website for updates and information, or contact our office should you require assistance.

Portal: You may have heard that the National Council is implementing a Members Portal. While helpful for Conferences and Particular Councils who report directly to National, Conferences and Particular Councils in the GTCC do not report directly to National. GTCC is in the process of renewing its website and will have options for Conferences to manage their records electronically. Your membership lists and reports are maintained by your Central Council, do not report directly to the National Council. We hope to unveil the new website soon, stay tuned!

Board of Directors Elections

We are searching for individuals interested in serving as a member on our Corporate Board of Directors.

If you are passionate about helping people who are impacted by poverty and are willing to share your personal and professional skills in board governance, strategic thinking, financial oversight, problem solving and issues management; this may be the challenge you have been looking for.

Our current Board has two Directors finishing their term, with the remaining Directors part way through their terms. **There are two positions open for the upcoming election.**

Board Terms Expiring September 2023: Danny Bourne, Director and John Sidle, Director

The Nominating Committee oversees the process of nominations and the upcoming election.

Please [click here for more information and the application form](#)

Please contact Louise Coutu, Executive Director should you have any questions.

Wanted! Please consider sharing your talents

We are in need of qualified persons to serve on the Board of Directors and skilled members to join our new Engagement Committee. Please consider this opportunity, and please pass this invitation to persons whom you think may assist the Society by serving.

Join the new Vincentian Engagement Committee

We're thinking about the future of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. The environment in which we operate has changed and continues to change rapidly. The Society is facing several challenges as we continue to serve over 35,000 of the most vulnerable among us each year and these needs are growing.

Please [click for more information and the application form](#)

Greater Toronto Central Council and Affordable Housing

“For those who have no homes, that they may quickly find a place in which they can live a decent and happy life” - from the closing prayers of the Society

You cannot help but be tuned into the affordable housing crisis our country is facing. Whether its your personal experience or you are a witness to the struggles of our Neighbours in Need, you know that securing reasonably priced, safe housing is the single largest challenge that persons face. The Society across Canada is taking steps to participate in a variety of initiatives to address this challenge, and we applaud and support these efforts. But did you know that your Central Council is the single largest provider of supportive and affordable housing in the Society, from coast to coast?

We have a variety of housing programs in place that provide our most vulnerable members of society with housing when they need it most, some will stay for a short period of time until they can sort out some of life challenges, and some will call our programs home for the rest of their lives.

As you are being called to raise your voice in support of more housing options for those whom we serve, you should be aware of what is happening now in **your** very Central Council. The *In the Loop* has featured a number of our programs over the past year. Please learn, know and share the efforts that you and your fellow Vincentians have worked on over the years to make housing a reality for hundreds of persons who have found themselves without a home.

Just this past March, we secured the purchase of **10** homes from Toronto Community Housing (TCHC). Since the mid 1980's, Toronto Central Council had been renting these homes from TCHC in order to provide short and longer term housing to men who wish to live in an abstinence based environment. These men faced lives of shelter insecurity, a huge obstacle to conquering addictions. When we discovered that TCHC wanted to divest itself of its scattered housing portfolio (single family residential homes), the Society immediately responded with an offer to purchase the homes so we could continue to provide this important, and much needed housing. We brokered quite a deal, paying for the whole ten homes at the cost of one, with funds carefully amassed by donations, bequests and pass-ups. We now are able, with great certainty to continue to house 68 people a night, in a safe, program based, life giving environment. **This is big news, something to be celebrated, shared, shouted from the roof tops!**

Our Vincentian vocation is to serve our Neighbours with dignity; safe housing is a critical basic need. To all Vincentians who understand their vocation to share their resources, we thank you for helping us make this happen. The work does not stop here, like any home, there is constant upkeep so please help us to sustain this housing and keep it comfortable for the many people who turn to us in their greatest need, those who are without homes. Affordable housing can seem like an insurmountable problem, yet here we are, together, making important inroads. Please support this incredible work **AND WATCH FOR DEVELOPING NEWS - WE ARE WORKING ON BUILDING AFFORADALE HOUSING FOR WOMEN IN ETOBICOKE!**