



# Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council

## In the Loop

March 2024

### From the Chair:

The great Russian author, Leo Tolstoy said that “Spring is the time of plans and projects.” As Christians we subscribe to the idea, expressed so nicely by Billy Graham, that the entire plan for the future has its key in the resurrection. So, while we may not yet be feeling the warmth of Spring, its spirit is trying as hard to come out as crocuses in our flower beds. As we emerge from our winter blahs, anxious to see the first robin and refreshed by the hope that Easter promises, it’s good to take stock of where we are, where we’ve been and where we’re going.

From my perspective as Chair of the Board, I see that we have been through a very busy and productive time in the life of Central Council and its constituent Conferences and Particular Councils. Our Vincentians continue to inspire with their work among our Neighbours in Need, our staff continues to raise the bar on the level of commitment they have to all those they serve in Special Works and, in the case of the head office staff, to all Vincentians. My colleagues on the Board continue to toil at the not very sexy, but critical, job of ensuring that our governance structure is sound, our finances are well managed and our future is bright.

We have wrestled with some thorny issues and I suspect that our solutions have not made everyone happy. We know there are always more of those waiting around the corner which is why it’s so important that we continue to strive to recruit board and committee members who have the skills, knowledge and experience to tackle our challenges head on and handle them with thoughtful professionalism.

I would like to acknowledge in a special way, our hard-working committee members. From Camps to Spirituality, from Finance to Health and Safety, from Governance to the newest group in Engagement, all have worked very hard to ensure that our mission as envisioned in our Strategic Plan is on track and on time. Many of these groups, like Membership Development, have produced high quality material and contributed to the many excellent programs and seminars on offer to all our Vincentians. And I want to commend all those who have taken the time and interest to participate in one or more of these programs. We are beyond fortunate in the quality and depth of our educational and training materials and that will only increase as we work on our new Website. It’s truly a blessing that we don’t need to travel beyond our GTA borders to be able to take advantage of the knowledge base offered by our staff and experienced Vincentians and I thank all of you who have participated and encourage those who have not yet done so, to take the plunge. It is, after all, Spring, the time of plans and projects.

And while you’re planning, perhaps you’ll consider offering your skills and talents as a member of one of our Committees or taking a leadership role in your own Conference. We know where we’ve been and where we are now; with your continued support and engagement we know there’s no place we can’t go.

Happy Easter to all. Hallelujah, He is Risen.

- Gary Valcour, Chair of the Board of Directors, GTCC

## Learning Sessions

### Spiritual Facilitators Sessions

Please join us for the return of these informative sessions, the last in the winter/spring series is scheduled for April 29, 2024, 6:30 pm until 7:30 pm. These sessions offer spiritual development, practical tips and opportunities for sharing. Please join us, all are welcome, and if you are interested in exploring this role, please attend! [Click here to join](#)

### Home Visits Forum

Our monthly Home Visitation sessions have been well attended, with Vincentians asking questions and sharing experiences on the core work of the Society – Home Visits. Please join us for the last in the winter/spring series taking place on Thursday, April 11, 2024. [Click here to join](#)

#### **Highlights from our last sessions:**

Financial and other Documentation: Do not take copies of personal information belonging to your Neighbours in Need. Should you have questions about why a Neighbour is asking for assistance, particularly repeat assistance, and after conversations, it leads the Conference to ask for verification of income or expenses, do not take copies. Some Conferences appear to be opening files, rather than documenting basic information such as income source, rent and expenses, unusual expenses causing a short fall in funds, etc. If a Conference is helping a Neighbour in Need through a tough time, asking for a Notice of Assessment, bank records, credit card statements etc., takes the relationship to a different level and in most situations, is not appropriate. If the Conference has established a relationship where they are simply providing funding every month or so to the same Neighbour, and they want to revisit the ways they are allocating their donations, an assessment can take place with Neighbours, and that may be the time to let them know you can't respond as frequently as they are calling.

#### **Things to keep in mind:**

- Persons living in subsidized housing are not always in greater need than persons living in market rent housing, the reverse may be true. All sorts of income earners, and persons living in all types of housing, run into financial difficulties from time to time.
- The Society does not choose to help or not help groups of people. If a Neighbour calls, and you discover that help may be better provided by other agencies, such as re-settlement services, then please make the referral.
- Do not record Social Insurance Numbers or birthdates of persons in your record keeping – you can record the year to provide age appropriate assistance for children for example, and if the system you are using demands a full date, enter everyone as 01/01/year. Camp applications are an exception – the parent/guardian is freely registering their children for a program, they must provide birthdates and copies of health cards.
- Remember, a Neighbour could ask to see what you are writing in your notes. It is unlikely you obtained a signed release, and you are not a clinician, so please be careful what you write. Notes are very helpful, particularly for the next team visiting the Neighbours, just do not record judgmental or subjective comments, touching on the highlights of the conversation.

These are sample notes that you could record, from a family calling a little more often, or needing more help than they have in the past:

- ✓ Mom Marjorie stated she is having a hard time recovering from her recent surgery, she said she has had a lot more follow-up appointments, which is causing a lot of financial hardship as she has to take a cab due to mobility issues and it is costing over \$200 a month. (good note)
- ✓ Mom Marjorie stated she has had some recent health challenges and they need a little extra help due to financial pressures this month, she said it's been a hard go. (good note)
- X Mom Marjorie had a surgery, she won't tell us what it was about, I think it could have been cancer. She is spending all her money on cabs, not sure what for, maybe she is tired of taking public transit. (bad note). In this case, it is totally fine to ask what the extra expenses are that she is facing, she does not have to tell you the personal health details.

## A call for Committee and Board of Directors Candidates!



### Join Our Board and Make a Difference! Please share with potential candidates!

Are you, or someone you know, passionate about making a positive impact in the Greater Toronto community? The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council is seeking dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors and help shape the future of our organization.

**About Us:** The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council invites interested persons to apply to the corporation's Board of Directors. The Society serves persons in need through two streams: a coordinated 1,400-member volunteer outreach responding to immediate needs of persons in the community experiencing food insecurity and other challenges, and through longer term staffed programs including emergency, transitional, supportive housing, subsidized summer camps for children and additional support services. The annual operating budget is 9 million dollars with a significant portion received from government and other funders. To learn about the Society, we invite you to visit our website: [www.ssvptoronto.ca](http://www.ssvptoronto.ca)

The Board of Directors is comprised of volunteers from the community who are elected to a 3 year term of office. The Board is seeking candidates with expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Business Management, Public Affairs & Communications,
- Government and Funder Contracts and Compliance, Finance, Accounting, Risk Management,
- Legal Expertise, Diversity Issues, Human Resource Management,
- Construction & Project Management, Information Technology

#### Commitment:

Prepare for, and actively participate in monthly Board meetings, special events, and perform follow-up tasks.

- ✓ Actively serve in the Society to advise and work with other board members on new initiatives, advocacy & outreach, governance, succession planning, marketing & communications
- ✓ Advocate for our needs in the community and among your colleagues and peers.
- ✓ All Board Members must submit to a Vulnerable Sector Screening Police Check

We Encourage Applicants from Diverse Backgrounds    How to Apply: [Download Application/Nomination Form](#)

## Seeking Committee Members

All Board Committees welcome new members. We are seeking individuals with experience to assist the Society in a variety of ways. If you have a particular interest or skill set and would like to explore options, please reach out and we can direct you to the committee of interest. Once you have filled out our application form, the Committee Chair will meet with you to discuss whether you will be a good fit. The committees, with summary points are listed below. Please contact [info@ssvptoronto.ca](mailto:info@ssvptoronto.ca) if you would like further information, the Terms of Reference or to speak with the Committee Chair.

**Engagement:** Outreach to current donors, potential donors and members to best position the Society

**Finance:** Stewardship, accountability and reporting

**Spirituality:** Support, networking and development for Spiritual Facilitators

**Communications:** Support to Committees and outreach for Conferences and Councils

**Governance and Board Resource:** Compliance, legislation and best practice

**Membership Development Committee:** Recruitment, Succession Planning and Learning Sessions

## Your Special Works – *Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam*

*Hello Campers!* Summer camp registration is now underway.

**Marygrove** welcomes girls ages 5 -13 for an 8-day camping adventure on the shores of Georgian Bay.  
**Camp Ozanam** welcomes boys, ages 7-12 for a 7-day camping adventure on Deer Lake in South River.

Both camps provide fully subsidized summer camp opportunities (no fees) for children from families who are experiencing financial and other difficulties. We offer traditional camp activities, swimming, canoeing, games, camp craft, sports, new friends and adventures in the great outdoors.

Camp registration packages have been mailed to all Conferences c/o of the parishes, if you have not received yours, please contact the head office, and if you need more application or health cards, please let us know.

These camps have been serving children of the Archdiocese for years. Thousands of young girls and boys have had the opportunity to enjoy a camping vacation, like their friends, despite family financial hardship. We rely almost solely on the efforts of Vincentians to reach out to potential registrants, you are the reason the camps have been full for years! Please make every effort to let your regular Neighbours in Need know about this wonderful camping opportunity, and let schools know that you can register children whom they may think would benefit from a week at camp; not every child who attends our camps needs to be from a family served by the Society.

*Vincentians + Registration = Happy Campers!*

*Welcome Camp Staff!*

Please share with young people in your life, parish, and community.

Positions are open for Cabin Counsellors, Counsellors in Training, and Waterfront Staff.

Training, with the exception of Waterfront Staff, will be provided. Camp life provides invaluable opportunities for developing communication and people skills; and the work environment is second to none! A challenging but rewarding job, this is an excellent opportunity for people thinking about going into the helping professions – teachers, social workers, health care providers and on!

For further information please contact: [campinfo@ssvptoronto.ca](mailto:campinfo@ssvptoronto.ca)

*Marygrove Camp 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rake-a-thon!*

Please join us, we so appreciate your help getting camp ready for the children.

A few hours of raking, at beautiful Marygrove in Penetanguishene, a picnic lunch and plenty of coffee. We could really use your help preparing the grounds for the children! Our target this year: minimum 6 rakers per Particular Council, plus helpers and guests ~ we will be done lickety-split. Can you help us meet that goal?

Families and friends are most welcome. Bring a rake if you have the space, gloves too! Coffee is on for 9:30 am; lunch is 12:30 pm; most folks leave before 3:00pm. Don't be the only people who have never had the pleasure!

For further information please contact: [campinfo@ssvptoronto.ca](mailto:campinfo@ssvptoronto.ca)