



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

May/June 2024

From the Chair:

The other day, as the sunshine struggled to make its way through the winter grime on my windows, I found myself thinking about spring cleaning and wondering if that's still a thing. When I was a boy, my mother would muster all hands for a week of thorough house cleaning. Each of my siblings and I had assignments as befitted our age. We couldn't understand the need as, to us, there was nothing wrong with the house the way it was. Nevertheless, the heavy scents of Javex and Pine Sol filled the air; our hands were red and our knees in agony. No battlefield general could have planned a more spirited attack on the accumulation of dust and grit, and none would have been more pleased with their results. Those memories are, I think, the reason we dream of having a clean house; but who dreams of actually doing the cleaning?

I wonder if the idea of spring cleaning might be a good way to think about how our Conferences and Councils are operating after the long winter of the Pandemic. Circumstances beyond our control forced us to find new ways to serve our Neighbours in Need. Like a house following a long winter, closed to the fresh air with snow and dirt tracked in, we grew accustomed to the way things were. But once you threw open the windows and got on your hands and knees to scrub the baseboards, you only had to look at your bucket of dirty water to know how much the cleaning was needed.

I don't think I would be stretching the analogy too far to say that the accumulation of grime began long before Covid-19 and a spring cleaning might address all those issues.

We've talked about returning to home visits many times and many of our Conferences have made great strides toward that goal. Others, less so. I get it; it's not easy. I read recently that most workers who were able to work from home in their pajamas are struggling with mandated returns to the workplace – even if the mandates are only for a few days a month or a week. Why should we be any different? Home visits are challenging! It's much easier to mail out a voucher or drop a bag of groceries on someone's porch. Is that what you signed up for or do you see your mission as something more?

There is no doubt that some of the changes in our processes were necessary and done with good intent but, as the saying goes, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. Like water, it's human nature to take the path of least resistance. It's easier to let someone else take leadership responsibility; it's easier to hand out other people's money than ask hard questions or have difficult conversations; it's usually easier to do it yourself than make the effort to help a new Conference member learn the job; it's easier to pretend that a fixed time between vouchers is the same thing as equity of service. All these seemingly small deviations become like the accumulated grime of winter on and in your house. All could probably benefit from a spring cleaning. Think of it as chance to hit the reset button on our Vincentian vocation.

On a cheerier note, summer will soon be upon us. Our Camp registrations are going well, and we look forward to entertaining a lot of young boys and girls at Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam. June is frequently election time for Conferences. I thank all the retiring Presidents for their service and wish all the new Presidents the best of luck; never hesitate to reach out if you should feel the need for assistance. Most of our Conferences will enjoy a bit of a

break from the regular meetings as will the Board. Of course, the important work never takes a break and I thank each of you for your continued efforts during the summer, and a special thanks to committee members and the Board who keep at it throughout the year. I hope that you will all have some down time to recharge and enjoy family and friends and that you will return rested and eager to go in September.

Bro. Gary Valcour, Chair of the Board

Summer Time and Happy Campers!

Rake-A-Thon: Thank you to all who supported the Marygrove Camp Annual Rake-A-Thon. A beautiful day with a wonderful group of volunteers, residents, staff and friends who worked together to clean up the camp for the summer ahead – a shout out to everyone who attended, and a special thanks to St. Margaret’s Conference, Toronto North Particular Council who had the most volunteers from one Conference – thank you! See you all next year – May 3, 2025!

Camp Registration: Don’t stop now! We have sent out a record of number of camper application cards to Vincentians to register campers, but still have plenty of space. The camps can accept applicants into the summer but the sooner we receive the cards, the better. Please check in with applicants so they are connected and ready to attend – pass on information to the head office for those who have changed their mind – perhaps a child on the waiting list can attend in their place. Please work away at ensuring eligible campers have this wonderful opportunity to enjoy a summer camping experience. Contact the office if you require additional forms.

Looking for Your Input

The newly formed GTCC Engagement Committee is helping the Society plan for the future. We want to make sure that the Society has a strong footing for the future so that our work can continue and expand to meet the growing needs of our Neighbours and all whom we serve.

To help us do this, your insights and ideas are invaluable. Customized surveys have been developed to ask for input from our Parish Priests, our Particular Council Presidents and Conference Presidents, our Vincentians as well as our parishioners. These surveys will be emailed to the various groups, in early June, with a mid June response timeline; parishioners will be surveyed in the fall.

We hope you will take the 10 – 15 minutes of your time to share your views! Watch for these surveys coming your way.

Learning Sessions

Orientation for New Members

Please join us to this semi annual session – held in two parts for all persons who are new Vincentians. Orientation to the Society – the history, structure, Special Works and the Rule are all reviewed. The dates of the sessions are:

Part 1 – **Monday, June 17th** – 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm ([click here to register for Part 1](#)) and;

Part 2 – **Monday, June 24th** – 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm ([click here to register for Part 2](#)).

New and returning Vincentians are all welcome.

Screening and Membership

A reminder that all Vincentians must be screened. In the rare occasion that persons volunteer for only one activity such as Bundle Ups, or annual packing of Christmas hampers, screening may not be required, however, anyone who has **any contact** with neighbours or their financial or personal information or is regularly involved with the Conference must be registered as a member through screening, otherwise they are not covered by our insurance. No one should be participating in Conference meetings or financial activities, unless they are in the process of joining the Society or are fully screened members.

We have a clear duty to protect the persons we serve, consequently discussions about service to Neighbours in Need at Conference meetings should be considered private and should be undertaken with as much sensitivity as possible. Policies that support membership, all found on the website at [Policies | SSVV - Toronto Central Council \(svdptoronto.org\)](#):

Vulnerable Sector Check – Nov 2023

Member Screening and Risk Management Policy – Nov 2023

Complaints Resolution Process Policy – Nov 2023

Membership and under the age of 18 Policy – April 2023

Annual General Meeting – Saturday, September 21, 2024

Save the date! The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, September 21st with celebrant Archbishop Francis Leo. Details will be emailed to each Vincentian in early August.

The call for Board of Directors Candidates – please pass this on!

Join Our Board and Make a Difference!

Are you 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 is committed to serving individuals in need through a range of programs and services. With a coordinated network of over 1,400 volunteers, we respond to the immediate needs of community members experiencing poverty related issues such as food insecurity and other challenges. Additionally, we operate staffed programs including emergency, transitional and supportive housing to persons living with addictions, mental health challenges, developmental disabilities; we serve women in crisis, offer VAW supports, and we offer subsidized summer camp programs for children from families in need.

To learn more about our organization, visit our website: www.ssvptoronto.ca

Board Member Responsibilities

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

Business Management	Public Affairs and Communications
Fund Raising Engagement	Finance, Accounting, Risk Management
Not for Profit Board Experience	Legal Expertise
Diversity	Human Resource Management
Construction and Project Management	Information Technology
Government & Funder Contracts & Compliance	

We encourage persons from diverse backgrounds who understand the legal and ethical responsibilities of serving on a Canadian Not for Profit corporate board to apply. Specifically, we are seeking individuals with firsthand experience with the types of outreach and services the Society offers.

Commitment

- Attend a minimum of 10 board meetings annually and perform any follow-up tasks; time commitment varies from 8 to 12 hours per month.
- Actively serve in the Society to advise and work with other board members on program development, advocacy & outreach, governance, succession planning, marketing & communications
- Advocate for the Society's needs in the community and among your colleagues and peers.
- All Board Members must submit to a Vulnerable Sector Screening Police Check.

How to Apply

If you are interested in joining our Board and contributing your skills and expertise to our mission, we encourage you to reach out to Louise Coutu, Executive Director, to initiate the application process. You can contact Louise at lcoutu@ssvptoronto.ca.

Join us in making a difference in the lives of those in need in our community. Together, we can create positive change and build a brighter future for all. Apply to join our Board today!

Your Special Works – Life Long Housing – St. Francis Residence

Another valuable program operated by GTCC, making a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable adults. Operating, since 1984, and offering 24 persons who live with mental health a safe and welcoming environment, get to know our St. Francis Residence, Bathurst and Dundas Streets, Toronto.

Our history:

In the 1980's the Ontario Government made a policy decision to cut back on their in-patient beds at the psychiatric institutions. Subsequently, many patients who were discharged into the community were unable to adequately advocate for themselves and lived in sub-standard housing or they became dependent on the emergency shelter system for survival. As this situation became increasingly unacceptable, the government of Ontario created a program that would provide housing for people who had experienced psychiatric illnesses, working with Not for Profits. Through this funding stream, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul opened St. Francis Residence in 1988 providing safe and secure housing to 24 men and women. Available funding does not cover all costs of this worthwhile service. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul funds a significant portion of the program at St. Francis Residence each year.

Our program:

St. Francis Residence offers permanent supportive housing in a community-based setting for 24 men and women who have a history of mental health problems and:

- are stabilized and capable of living in a community-like setting;
- are independent enough to participate in basic daily living activities; and
- who freely choose to live in our home.

St. Francis Residence is classified as a Personal Care Boarding Home, and is operated as such under the terms of the Tenant Protection Act, by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Greater Toronto Central Council. We offer private and semi-private bedrooms, shared washrooms and bathing facilities, lounge areas, an outdoor patio and spacious garden, and three meals and snacks a day.

Supervision

Trained Staff provide 24 hours of supportive supervision in a life-giving, homelike environment. Staff encourage independence, socializing in the community, and development of life skills. When needed, staff will assist and give direction with laundry & housekeeping chores.

Applications, Screening & Support Services

The Ministry of Health provides programmes through *Habitat Services*, including initial screening of referrals for suitability, ongoing residential activities and staff education through *C.O.T.A. (Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Mental Health Services)*, and quarterly standards of care inspections. All applicants to St. Francis Residence are referred to Habitat Services for the admission process, contact us if you require further information on admissions.