

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Executive Directors Report – 2017 - 2018

Toronto Central Council and Special Works

(under the Corporation of Toronto Central Council)

The **Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Toronto Central Council** continues its commitment to serving the most vulnerable through our Special Works programs. Largely focused on housing, the Special Works operate in contractual partnership with three levels of government receiving annual funding for the provision of emergency and longer term housing to individuals who may otherwise find themselves without safe housing.

Our Shelters continue to house society's most vulnerable, women in crisis. Funded by the City of Toronto Hostel Services we provide housing to 132 women in four locations: Amelie House, Elisa House, Mary's Home and St. Clare's Residence. With occupancy pushing 100%, the shelters were a very busy part of the Society's outreach for 2017. The shelters employ the largest numbers of staff in this division. There is a crisis in the Shelter system with vulnerable persons unable to secure housing; temporary, short term or long term. The influx of refugees into the Toronto area over the past year has pushed the shelter system past its capacity and the City is struggling to cope, relying on respite services to provide basic accommodation, but few resources.

The Society continues to provide optimum service under the leadership of the shelter management team who have an average of 20 years' experience each in the field. Shelter funding is provided to the City of Toronto by the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) with a top up of over 30% from the City. We are focused on providing the best quality of care for those who turn to us in their time of need while withstanding pressures from the City to compromise our service levels to house more individuals.

The MCSS directly funds the Society for the operation of three homes for adults with developmental disabilities located in Scarborough providing both operational and facility grants based on occupancy. The majority of adults served in these homes have moved from now closed government run institutions to community based residential housing. Providing permanent housing for 18 residents, the staff of DePaul, Vincent and Martineau Homes are entrusted with the complete well-being of persons who will, for the most part, spend their entire lives in our care. We recently lost our beloved resident Lionel, who lived with us for more than 35 years, and died at the tender age of 96 years old. His passion for work, his love for a good country song and his charming manners will influence us for years to come. The Society is currently upgrading the group homes to meet the new requirements under the fire code, interpreting each residence as a care facility.

The Ministry of Health funds Ozanam House which is an 11 bed pre-treatment facility for men waiting to enter a recovery program. Once formal treatment has taken place, individuals can move into one of thirteen residential homes to live and work in community with others perusing

a clean and sober life. The new revisions under the fire code have impacted this program and has caused the loss of 12 beds from homes that have three stories due to a lack of fire exits off the third floor. Toronto Community Housing owns the homes that are affected and are considering offering additional homes to make up for the loss of beds.

Consistently underfunded, but always in high demand, services and housing for individuals living with mental health is slowly becoming a priority in the demand for supportive housing. The Society operates St. Francis Residence, a 24 bed residence serving this vulnerable client group. We have experienced firsthand the lack of services for persons who require on going supportive housing as so many individuals in the shelter system would clearly benefit from this type of stable, long term housing. As the home reaches its 35th year of operation, the facility landlord, Mainstay, will be entering into lease negotiations with the Society

The Society owns many of the facilities and relies on funding from benefactors as well as grants, to maintain the integrity of the buildings and to improve the program space. Additionally, funds are allocated each year for appliances, furniture and bed replacements as the wear and tear on these items is substantial. Operating funding does not always cover all costs associated with the programs, especially those which rely on occupancy to boost the income levels. Funding shortfall is provided through the support of Toronto Central Council, surpluses in some programs, and Stores Division revenue. (*Summary Financial Statements, page 5*).

The Special Works are managed by an experienced, competent team who embody the philosophy and traditions of the Society through their continued commitment to providing the highest quality care to our most vulnerable through person to person outreach. This past year, the team was challenged by the funders introducing new quality assurance measures, new standards and increased legislation in areas of service and health and safety. Our Central Council staff supports the Special Works outreach as well as managing the referrals for the home visitation program through the conferences

The Society's camps, Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam provide over 1,700 children with a residential camping experience, with registrations undertaken by Vincentians and Social Workers. Camp Ozanam is in the process of renewal, improving the facilities to the standard of Marygrove. In the near future, sessions will be added to the boy's camp in an effort to provide additional service. Marygrove is funded by the long established Marygrove Camp annual collection, and Camp Ozanam receives a grant from Catholic Charities, ShareLife funding.

This past year, we were forced to close our Port Credit store as the rent became unmanageable, thankfully partnering with Salvation Army continues and we are able to provide basic necessities to neighbours in need in many communities. Toronto Central Council continues to realize the benefits of public support of our used goods and clothing collections through Bundle Up weekends. Geography, traffic and increased bed bug infestations has continued to challenge our small, but dedicated warehouse team who work tirelessly to deliver much needed items across the GTA. Relationships with several salvage dealers has allowed the Stores Manager to exchange surplus material for much needed cash to support the good works of the Society.

The revised Employment Standards Act under Bill 148 has caused extra expense as the Society meets the standards under the Act that address statutory holiday pay, personal leave days and equal pay for equal work. Some of the funders have provided additional funding to address the burden of the increased costs.

Several committees assist the Board in their efforts, lending expertise, experience and support in areas of Finance, Membership Development, Governance and the Camps. This year a Spiritual Development committee has been added. Members are always welcome to consider serving as skills and experience are needed to increase our effectiveness and outreach.

This past year, much of the focus of the Governance Committee has been on developing a more effective governance model to provide equal support to the Special Works and Vincentian activities. Proposed By-laws have been drafted and recommended for approval by the membership, ensuring that our important outreach through both Special Works and Home Visitation are equally supported and effectively led.

The Society remains committed to the vision of earlier Boards who bravely responded to the vision of founder, Frederic Ozanam who challenged us to address the root causes of poverty. To live with dignity, people need shelter, food, clothing and a place to lay their head. The Society is able to provide all of this despite funding challenges and competing interests for support, staying the course and quietly assisting those in need to live with dignity and hope.

Please refer to the Vincentian Activity Secretarial Report which summarizes the activities of the Vincentian Community, comprising 11 Particular Councils, 114 conferences and 1,274 members. The core work of Home Visitation cumulated in 24, 800 home visits in 2017, confirming the critical need for this outreach. The Vincentian community, with the assistance of the Membership Development Committee continues to strive to secure the presence of the Society in all parishes, with viable conferences, supported members, and well connected communities.

Respectfully submitted,
Louise Coutu
Executive Director