

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

Executive Directors Report – Annual General Meeting, September 2021

Serving through the Pandemic

The very long and rich history of the Greater Toronto Central Council provides the strong foundation for Vincentians to live our faith through service, a simple yet impactful concept motivated by concern for others. After 162 years of serving Neighbours in Need throughout the GTA, our Vincentians willingly changed gears in our 163rd year, and continued to serve during the worldwide pandemic. During the restrictions, the longing to connect with all our neighbours, family and friends certainly spilled over into our outreach. Phone conversations, curbside delivery and mailed out assistance, while necessary to ensure everyone's safety during the different stages of the pandemic; were poor substitutes for our core calling – person to person service. We are grateful for the perseverance of our members, the patience of our Neighbours, and the unwavering commitment of our donors who ensured Conferences had adequate funds to serve throughout the pandemic. We will be working towards re-establishing Home Visitation in its true form as the pandemic restrictions ease further.

GTCC by the Numbers

1,381 Vincentians
111 Conferences
11 Particular Councils
27,553 Home Visits*
2.2 million dollars =
Total Donations to all
Conferences (does not include
Special Works funding)

*modified for COVID protocols

Employees and Special Works

Our employees, despite considerable challenges, worked through the pandemic, serving the most vulnerable, providing emergency, supportive and long term housing in our residential housing programs and keeping the office open and operating. Despite the increased burden of COVID protocols, staff shortages due to enforced isolation periods and cumbersome PPE, on top of already demanding work, the staff looked after all who came for service. Our housing capacity limits were adjusted during the height of the pandemic to ensure we complied with physical distancing, and movement of residents through different programs was limited. The Stores Division was subjected to the pandemic retail closures twice in 2020. You, our committed Vincentians were eager to hold the **Bundle Up** collections as soon as the opening stages allowed, thankfully providing some goods to share with shopping neighbours, with the surplus going to wholesalers for extra income. We are grateful for this support and the cooperation of the Archdiocese in providing this service to the community. We lost two summers of camping, the first ever close down since we opened Marygrove Camp in 1962, and Camp Ozanam in 2015. A heartbreak for all the children who rely on this adventure to be free in the outdoors, the families who enjoy a break, the staff who live to work at camp, and all those who know how positive this experience is for the children we serve. We pray that we can be safely back in action next summer.

Committees and the work of the Board

Committees of the Board worked tirelessly on a number of initiatives engaging our membership. The **Particular Council Presidents' Committee** focused on succession planning, equity of service, reviewing policies and initiatives designed to support Vincentian outreach. The **Membership Development Committee** is launching a series of Learning Modules coinciding with this AGM, ranging from information for prospective and new members, to refreshers on our core service, Home Visitation and the 5 Guiding Principles. Focusing on developing member-engaged Spiritual Facilitators, the **Spirituality Committee** held a number of sessions to engage and support persons in this developing role. Assisting us with the roll out of all these initiatives, the branding guide and protocol, policy development and the pending renewal of the website are all the responsibility of the **Communications Committee**, established by the new Board. You have all been invited to share your views on the website to help in the re-development. We will be including a member's portal to allow for easier access to materials, forms and reports; we will keep you informed of the process.

Workshops and Presentations for Members 2020/21

Spirituality Committee: Orientation for Spiritual Facilitators, small group sessions, techniques for leading small groups, and a celebratory session led by Monsignor Bianco

Treasurer's Workshop

Tech Support Microsoft Teams Workshops

Orientation for New Members

Governance Town Hall – Understanding our Structure

Home Visitation – Our Core Service

The **Finance Committee** supported the efforts of our Director of Finance, Liza Gowe, in maneuvering through additional pandemic reporting, completion of comprehensive audited statements, updated Finance policies, training for Treasurers, support for individual conferences; all the while making improvements to our accounting and payroll departments. Risk management is continually being reviewed at all levels of the Society; we successfully completed a formal three-year extensive review through a formal assessment undertaken by the Ministry of Children's Community and Social Services of our financial and accountability responsibilities.

Our **Governance and Board Resource Committee** had a challenging year. The

Greater Toronto Central Council has had By-laws in place since we first incorporated in 1875. Our By-laws, designed to provide direction on the corporate responsibilities of the Society, are reviewed on an annual basis by the corporation and updated as necessary. Several discussions were held to satisfy the National Council's comments regarding prominence of the Rule in our foundational documents, balanced with our obligations under the law. The GTCC By-laws do not replace the Society's Rule; the By-laws are a set of operational directives demanding adherence by Not-for-Profit organizations to Canadian law. Understanding the breadth of our outreach is critical, appreciating the significant commitments, some lifelong, to the persons in our care and our employees is necessary. This is not a small operation. It is a large, multi service organization providing layers of service to the most vulnerable in our communities, under scrutiny from a number of regulatory bodies. Our Board is charged with protecting the Society and all we do, a significant responsibility relying on experience, sound legal advice and best practice. The discussions on the By-laws continue, and we hope to resolve the outstanding matters soon. Please see the following chart to gain perspective of the size of the Greater Toronto Central in relation to the other levels of the Society in Ontario and Canada.

Organizational Structure, Commitments and Programs National, Regional and Greater Toronto Central Councils

	Instituted	Incorporated	Employees	Assets	Financials	Programs and services
National Council	1971	1982: By-law review 2011	3	Operating budget: \$937,383 + Head Office located in Ottawa	Unaudited	Committee work, resources, Twinning and emergency aid, support to Regional Councils
Regional Council	1984	1985: By-law review 2021	1	Operating Budget \$369,094	Unaudited	Committee work, resources, North of 60, Ozanam Fund, coordinates insurance and support for those outside of GTCC
Greater Toronto Central Council	1853 1897	1875: By-law review 2020	72 Full Time 122 Part Time 134 Seasonal	\$16 Million Operating Budget \$8 million	Fully audited	11 Particular Councils, 1,400 Vincentians; 10 owned sites, 15 leased sites, serving 270 Residents, 48 permanent (lifelong) residents, 2 camps serving 1800 campers, Funding agreements with City of Toronto, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Housing, Government of Canada, Catholic Charities; stores, resources, member screening, support and development, insurance for members and programs, committee work, risk management, policies and procedures

Moving forward

Over the next year, we will be acquiring 10 homes from the Toronto Community Housing Corporation; houses we have leased for over 30 years to provide abstinence based housing in our Recovery Housing program. These homes are available to the Society at a cost substantially below market rate as TCHC divests themselves of agency houses. By purchasing these homes, we will continue this important program which is an integral part of our affordable housing envelope. This initiative, along with sustainability, succession planning, program development, and other areas of growth will be included in our developing Strategic Plan.

Our Vincentians and employees under the leadership of our Board of Directors, and the spiritual guidance of Monsignor Bianco, continued the good work of the Society to all who turned to us in their time of need. This was a year where we all learned to live and serve in a different way, where we encountered sadness, hardship, frustration, as well as signs of hope. As we move forward, perhaps more confident in the technology that kept us connected together, we will combine the best parts of that world with our core mission – person to person service, neighbours helping neighbours, persons living their faith.

God allows us to give rise to the practice of two beautiful virtues:
perseverance, which leads us to attain the goal, and constancy,
which helps us to overcome difficulties. ~ Vincent de Paul

Submitted by Louise Coutu, August 2021