

To: Mayor Rob Ford & Toronto City Councilors

November 7, 2011

Re: Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Community Homes

Dear Mayor Ford and Toronto City Councilors,

On the verge of suicide, in the dead of winter, on a dark, dreary January day – homeless, penniless – the body trembles from the withdrawals and the cold as the mind ponders the delirium tremens! Yet I search the streets for that liquid courage to do the final deed that so desperately would relieve the pain. Having abandoned my family, my wife, my son, my daughter – surely there is no other way out!

That was 7 years ago, and if it wasn't for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, I can honestly say I would not be alive today. Through the grace of Vincenpaul Community Homes, I was welcomed into Ozanam House – not judged, berated or scolded – I was offered a helping hand – a way out, that is, if I was to listen and take the suggested path of recovery that the volunteers and staff so earnestly guided me towards.

Under their guidance, support and encouragement, my road to recovery took on a whole new approach allowing me to recover, rebuild a life that would see me reconnect and establish a loving environment with family, attend college for a 3 years full time while working part time, and an opportunity to give back what I was so freely given, all under auspices of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

I offer this glimpse to you, of those dark days of my journey, having succumbed to the depths of despair due to the chronic disease of alcoholism, as an insight to the invaluable services provided by the VincenPaul Community Homes!

Today, under the umbrella of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, there are 11 homes where over 80 people share that journey, the very difficult and sometimes what seems an insurmountable path to recovery! This recovery is built on the fundamental belief that the residents are served best not when provided for, but when the tools are given to live successful, independent lives, both in and out of treatment.

Mayor Ford and councilors, what is at stake here is not something that can be scrutinized on an accountants balance sheet as a debit or credit, or an asset or liability – it is to do with the quality of life that keeps Families together, that brings Families together and rekindles the relationships between husbands and wives, sons and daughters, sisters and brothers and their extended families.

Allow the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul to serve those in need, those that are afflicted and who so desperately require the help, by exempting these 11 Vincentian Homes as they provide the 'social capital' our City needs to build and maintain the kind of society and community all Torontonians desire.

Respectfully submitted,

*Gary Haines*