



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

November 2023

From the Chair:

Over the course of three sessions in October, I had the pleasure of sharing a “virtual stage” with our amazing Executive Director as we presented a refresher course on the role of the Conference President. Both new and seasoned Conference Presidents were encouraged to attend, and it was gratifying to see so many taking their role seriously and investing their time to listen and learn. I was pleased as well to see several Particular Council Presidents in attendance.

We tried, and I think succeeded, in highlighting the key elements of Conference work, not just for Presidents (although that was the focus), but for all Vincentians. Because of that broader scope we encouraged the Presidents to share the information with their Conferences. I hope they have done or will do so soon.

Making that presentation reminded me of something that every athlete at every level learns early on and is best summed up in a quote from the great Michael Jordan, “You can practise shooting eight hours a day, but if your technique is wrong then all you become is very good at shooting the wrong way. Get the fundamentals down and the level of everything you do will rise”. Getting the fundamentals down is as crucial to us as it is to any athlete. And the most fundamental principle is stewardship; caring for your neighbours and caring for your fellow Conferences. We have the privilege of issuing tax receipts for donations from individuals and groups who trust us. They trust us to use the funds carefully, purposefully, and effectively to support our neighbours in need. What this means in real terms is that we don’t hoard money; we are honest in telling neighbours that we are not a regular source of income; we carefully review requests for assistance and don’t just hand out money or vouchers with no discernment or simply because we have it and don’t want to run out.

Conferences and Particular Councils have a moral duty, clearly set out in the Rule, to pass up funds so that those funds can be distributed to the areas where they will do the most good. Passing up funds, in addition to being an expression of caring, is critical for the ongoing administration of all 116 Conferences and 1400 Vincentians. Paper, rent, office salaries, heat, light, and insurance are not free. Those items are not provided by National or Regional. They are provided for all our Conferences by Toronto Central Council and each of us as Vincentians and as Conferences must contribute their fair share, generally expressed as anything beyond 3 months of operating costs.

In the presentation we provided several examples to illustrate different points. One of the most telling and, in my view, most scandalous was the following real life situation: On April 1, 2023 Conference A had \$3,422 in funds and gift cards. Neighbouring Conference B had \$84,942 in funds and gift cards. Those Conferences had the same number of Vincentians and the same level of calls for assistance! What’s wrong with that picture? How do we explain that to the senior who dropped a \$20 bill in the poor box expecting it to be used to help feed the hungry? Or to the generous donor who has just put a large legacy bequest in the will to help feed our neighbours in need? How would we explain the \$85,000 bank balance to Revenue Canada when they remind us that our charitable status is not granted so we can hoard and invest donations?

We are all human and as humans it's very easy to slip into patterns of behaviour that have more to do with what we've always done or what's easiest than what perhaps we ought to do. It's certainly easy to be fearful that we'll run out of money to do our work, but we should be mindful of St. John Paul II's exhortation to be not afraid. New Vincentians learn from experienced Vincentians and if those experienced Vincentians have been, as Michael Jordan put it, "shooting the wrong way" for years, we need to be reminded of the fundamentals.

You do amazing work and I pray that God will bless you for it. Let's make sure we're doing it the right way.
– Gary Valcour, Chair of the Board of Directors

Welcome to...

We welcome two new Conferences to the Society, St. Padre Pio in York South Particular Council, and St. Marguerite d'Youville in Peel North. Congratulations to all who have joined this important outreach, and much thanks to all Vincentians who supported the launch of these new Conferences, you inspire, motivate and reaffirm our commitment to serve our Neighbours in Need.

Conference President Refresher:

Thank you to all Conference Presidents and the Particular Council Presidents who attended the refresher session. Congratulations to Etobicoke PC for having the best representation by Conference and Council. The Society is a vast organization, understanding the positioning of GTCC as the largest entity in Canada is so important as we rely on stewardship and accountability to our donors, and to our Neighbours in Need. For those who missed the session, we will be holding it again, early in the new year.

Learning Sessions

Orientation for New Members

The Orientation Session for new members are a virtual two-part series, with [Part 1](#) to be held on Monday, November 27th and [Part 2](#) on Monday, December 4th, both from 6:30 pm until 8:00 pm. The link will be sent to the Conference President, please be sure your new members attend. Orientation is a part of the screening requirements. You may think, I have been a member for a while, do I really need orientation? These sessions focus on the whole Society, the Rule, the role of your Conference, Particular Council, our outreach through Special Works, and our vocation as Vincentians.

Treasurers Workshops

We invite you to register for our upcoming Treasurers' Workshop, scheduled for Monday, November 20th from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm via this link - <https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/75ecb067-c26f-4228-ab36-a5e9fb1abc74@bd4952d7-9d88-4fc0-a6b8-3c5b47ef65e3>

If you are new to the role, curious about the role, or would simply like a refresher, please join us by clicking the [link to register](#). Once registered, you will receive an email with the meeting link (almost immediately) and will automatically receive a reminder email one hour before the session is set to begin. Please note that this workshop is separate from our T3010 Workshop which is scheduled for Tuesday, December 5th. We will email details about that workshop a little closer to that date.

Returning in the New Year...

[Spirituality Sessions](#) for Spiritual Facilitators and those interested in the role will resume the last Monday of every month, January through March. Watch for further details, after the New Year.

Before you Know It...

The new year will be upon us, and with it, the annual reports that come around each year. We will be sending the reports out Christmas week, and encourage everyone to book time to complete the Financial and Activity reports by the end of January. GTCC reports the activity of all Particular Councils and Conferences to the Regional Council, and we require your report to produce a complete set.

The call for Committee Candidates and Board of Directors

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. 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 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

We are always seeking qualified candidates for the Board of Directors, serving 3-year terms. If you have previous experience serving on a Board, please consider putting your name forward for next year, or encouraging someone you know who would be suitable. Please visit [Election to the Board of Directors | SSVSP - Toronto Central Council \(svdptoronto.org\)](http://ssvp-toronto-central-council.svdptoronto.org) for information and an application.

The Board has undergone an assessment process to review strengths and challenges, and to identify needed skills. We are well prepared with this board model to welcome new members into an efficient and collegial atmosphere.

Succession Planning - An important message to repeat

Succession Planning is one of the most challenging aspects of our work as Vincentians. Very few people join the Society hoping and wishing to take on leadership roles. The fact is, without people in these leadership roles, our work cannot continue. Our structure is such that we need a President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and up to 3 Vice Presidents to share the workload. Persons taking on these roles should do so fully anticipating that after they have lent their talents, someone else will step in. We are working with the Particular Council Presidents to streamline some of the responsibilities so the workload is lighter. Please consider stepping forward. The Society, the Council, Conference's and our Neighbours need your considered discernment to join us in an executive role.

Yours must be a work of love, of kindness, you must give your time, your talents, yourselves. The poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect. You must not be content with tiding the poor over the poverty crisis; You must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty, with the aim of a long term improvement. — Frédéric Ozanam

Announcing...

For those who were able to attend the September AGM, or the recent Conference President Refresher Sessions, you heard about the Society's newest venture into the provision of affordable housing – the new Elisa House!

We are working with a developer to open a purpose built 100 plus unit transitional housing facility for women, one block north of our current site in Etobicoke. Elisa House is currently a 30 bed emergency shelter for women owned and operated by the Society. Through a land swap deal, the Society will receive a brand new building, which in addition to the 100 plus units, will continue to host an emergency shelter. Please watch for more information as this exciting program unfolds, a few years in the making.

Your Central Council remains committed to addressing the root causes of poverty. In addition to praying for those who have no homes, we are taking action. All Vincentians need to be aware of, and share the efforts we are making to improve the lives of those whom we serve, we need, and appreciate your continued support.



Existing Elisa House building



Proposed new transitional housing building (view looking east on Portland St)