



Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

September 2025

From the Chair:

Swan Song: a metaphor from ancient Greek most commonly used to describe a final, powerful performance or gesture before a person's death, retirement, or departure from a public role. It derives from an old belief that swans, which are typically silent throughout their lives, sing a beautiful melody in their final moments.

Dear Vincentians: This note will undoubtedly lack the characteristics of a beautiful melody so, less swan and more ugly duckling. It will, however, be my final missive as Chair of the GTCC Board. They say time flies when you're having fun but, in my experience, as we get older it flies even when we're not. William Gibson astutely observed that time moves in one direction, memory in another. A nice way of saying that while time marches inexorably forward, we can slow it down a bit by revisiting memories of the past, memories forever locked in their association with a specific event or person.

The past six years as chair of the board have certainly created a lot of memories, most of them good. As with most good memories, mine tend to be associated with people. Our Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is populated with amazing people who do even more amazing work. It would take far more space than I have here to list everyone I'd like to thank and acknowledge for all they've done for the organization and often for me personally. From Committee members, Conference and PC Presidents to all the dedicated staff in our camps, homes, residences and programs, I could not have asked for a finer group, nor do I have enough words of gratitude for all you do. I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge in a special way all my board colleagues (about 15 at last count) some of whom, sadly, have gone on to their heavenly reward. In all cases, their commitment to and love of the Society and in particular the GTCC, was unwavering and unquestionable. I thank them for making the chair's role if not easy at least manageable. I need to mention a few folks who were remarkable for their support behind the scenes, namely Monsignor Bianco, Scott Whitley, Wayne Gray and Graham Boyce; your wisdom and perspicacity were invaluable as we navigated the often stormy waters of the "new" governance model. And nothing would happen without our spectacular head office gang Andrew, Pedro, Sarah, Liza, our financial guru and, of course, our intrepid leader, Louise. If you look up the phrase "sine qua non", you will find a picture of Louise.

When I think back to that first board meeting, six years ago, I'm reminded of the words of the old (and now completely verboten) Virginia Slims Cigarette ad whose tag line was, "you've come a long way baby!" And it's been quite a journey. From implementing a new governance model to maneuvering through the challenges of a global pandemic, purchasing 10 properties from the City of Toronto and a recovery home in Barrie, developing a new strategic plan, equity of service policy, code of conduct and conflict of interest, reviving the newsletter (In the Loop), negotiating a deal for a new \$15 million multi-story residence, completely updating our website and creating a new, cloud-based CAMS system, successfully defending our trademark rights and drawing attention to the many governance failures and issues with National Council. We did all this while overseeing an annual budget of \$10 Million with 300 staff and 1400 volunteers and still found time to manage the key relationship with the Archdiocese and to clarify and set out for future boards the relationship between GTCC and the Conferences and PCs.

The past, as Shakespeare wrote, is prologue. For over 170 years, successive generations of smart, good-hearted, dedicated men and women, have built on the hard work of those who preceded them. Sir Isaac Newton, author of the Principia Mathematica, perhaps the most important scientific work in history, said, "If we have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." I can't think of a better way to sign off my stint at the helm. I am confident that those who take up the challenge will continue to protect and grow this most marvellous institution so that we'll be able to provide loving care to our neighbours in need far into the future.

Thank you, everyone, for your support and for all you do.

Gary Valcour, Chair

Learning Sessions and Important Dates

World Day of the Poor:

World day of the Poor is set for November 16th, with the theme, "You Are My Hope". Material will be sent to the Conferences the week following Thanksgiving.

Orientation for New Members:

Please save the date – **Monday, November 3, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm**, for the Orientation Session for New Members. New members will be asked to complete a self-study module prior to the session. The module will be sent to members in advance together with the link, mid-October.

Home Visitation Discussion Group

Please save the dates – **Thursday, October 30, November 13, November 27, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm**,. Join us for an opportunity to share best practices, ask questions and talk about the successes and challenges of our core work. The meeting links will be sent mid-October.

CAMS Training and Treasurer Sessions

The dates for these sessions will be announced in mid-October, please watch for the email invites and links to the sessions and training.

Engagement Committee Update

The Engagement Committee continues its work to bring information, support and assistance to members on the five priority areas (pillars) identified by Vincentians and first reported to you last spring.

Recruitment:	Recruit new Vincentians and ensure an effective orientation
Leadership:	Identify Vincentians who can take on leadership roles and succeed our current leaders
Donations:	Sustain and increase our donations
Meetings:	Improve our meetings so they are important and worth attending
Resources:	Ensure Vincentians are aware of current resources and materials available to help them serve Neighbours in Need better; identify where there might be gaps.

We are moving forward with a prioritized action plan, establishing teams to support each “pillar”, and are seeking members who have an interest in contributing to our 5 Step Plan. This volunteer opportunity will be of interest to members who would like to help out with a short term commitment, working with fellow Vincentians to further develop plans and materials to support each pillar. We hope you consider lending your skills and experience, contact us at info@ssvptoronto.ca for a participant application. We look forward to hearing from you.

Memorandum of Understanding for Conferences and Particular Councils

Conference Presidents and Treasurers received a memo last week outlining the requirement to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) supporting the connection of the Conferences and Particular Councils to GTCC. This MoU is required to confirm insurance, operating and governance matters.

We have produced a document which further explains the MoU. In it, you will find a more fulsome explanation on submission, use, aggregation, CAMS and more. The MoU will be on your next Conference meeting agenda, please review the FAQ by clicking here:

[Frequently asked Questions – September 24, 2025](#)

Thank you for taking the time to review this material offering further explanation of the MoU. Gone are the days where we simply relied on the good will of volunteers serving our most vulnerable at the parish level. The Society must document steps taken to reduce risk and ensure that Vincentians and the Society, are protected.

<https://ssvptoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/MoU-FAQ-Sept-24-2025.pdf>

For 170 years, the volunteers and staff of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have been helping those in need in their homes and ours. Our diverse outreach addresses food insecurity in our local communities, and includes professionally run shelters, recovery programs, summer camps and much more and much more