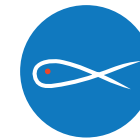


SOCIAL JUSTICE

Vincenpaul
CANADA



The newsletter of the
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
Volume 2 no. 8 - October 2018

CLICKABLE!

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**We invite you to
join us on our
national campaign.**

**Campaign material
and customizable
posters for the
World Day of the
Poor are available
for you on the
National website at
www.ssvp.ca**

**November 18, 2018
WORLD DAY OF THE POOR**

CHAIR REPORT

Dear fellow Vincentians,

As we say good bye to summer and return to the reality of poverty in Canada, I would like to extend an invitation to you to join us in our social justice efforts. There is great strength in the grass roots conference structure that we have enjoyed since our beginning as we conduct our works of charity. This format allows our members to see poverty in their community, to meet our neighbours in need and to gain a unique insight into the challenges that poverty presents to all Canadians.

It is this same concept of a grass roots network that we encourage in relation to social justice. While we have had a fair amount of success in developing this network of social justice, there is still a need to continue to grow. I would encourage you to support the addition of social justice as an agenda item for your conference meeting. The selection of one or more members to act as your conference social justice representative can also add to discussions of social justice at your conference meeting. At the council level, perhaps a social justice committee can be formed to bring social justice to this higher level. The council committee acts in the same way as the council as it brings together reps from the conference to share and discuss common issues and ways to work together in addressing social justice. In our national efforts to assist you, we have developed a Social Justice Guide, which you can find on the national website www.ssvp.ca by clicking on projects and committees. Our social justice efforts include the areas of systemic change, advocacy, restorative justice (prison ministry) and our efforts working with indigenous peoples (North of 60, First Nations). Please consider becoming active in social justice by sending us an email.

Restorative justice - I would like to invite members to consider getting involved in restorative/prison ministry. The idea of visiting prisons is not appealing to many of our members but there is much more you can do for people affected by crime. Besides the victim and their families, the inmates often have families who suffer while their loved one is imprisoned. Any involvement can make a difference. It may be simply forming a small group to pray for all the victims of crime. There are also currently projects related to

helping an inmate upon his/her release by providing what we call a prison release kit. We have another project which will provide greeting cards that the families of prisoners can use to send a message of love to their family members in prison. We also prefer using the term returning citizen for former inmates. We welcome your comments on anything your conference is doing.

When discussing restorative justice, there is a disproportionately high number of indigenous people in our prison system, the causes of which are numerous. We need to examine these causes, including listening to the indigenous community, and consider how we may have a positive effect by advocating for changes to the criminal justice system.

North of 60 has completed another successful summer in both our Western and Ontario regions. There is still much more we can accomplish, and we welcome your involvement. In addition, there is much more we can do related to First Nations communities across Canada. I would urge our membership to look at ways you can educate your own membership by reaching out to nearby First nations communities and inviting them to share their history, culture and faith traditions with your council or conference.

In closing I would encourage anyone with an interest in social justice and changing systems that can lead to addressing the root causes of poverty in Canada to consider joining our network across Canada.

Jim Paddon, Chair
National Social Justice Committee
jpsvp@hotmail.ca

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BASIC INCOME: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF A SUCCESSFUL FUTURE FOR CANADA

Vincenians daily see the suffering of our fellow citizens as they struggle to survive on incomes that are sometimes less than 50% of the established Low Income Measure (LIM), the most commonly used international poverty measure. The LIM is 50% of the median income, and people below the LIM are in the lowest 25% of incomes in Canada. **We see single people survive on about \$700 per month and couples on \$1200 per month.** Shelter costs eat up so much of their income that there is not enough left for basic needs such as food, clothing and telephone. This reality exists across Canada because there is not much variance between the provinces. **We also know that this depth of poverty causes severe mental and physical illness in our neighbours and we need to change our social system to make life better for them.**

However, providing better incomes for our most vulnerable citizens is more than a social justice or humanitarian issue. It is also an economic one.

For years, we have known that technology is transforming economies and workplaces. We know that many jobs are threatened by automation. Manufacturing, driverless vehicles, online shopping and self-checkouts are visible examples where tasks are being carried out, at least in part, by technology rather than by people. **The Brookfield Institute's report in 2016, "The Talented Mister Robot" projects that in the next 10-20 years, 42% of jobs are at risk of being affected by automation.** 396,000 jobs could be lost in Ontario alone.

That same report suggests that in that same timeframe, 712,000 jobs will likely be created. It's good news if we take steps to prepare for the high-tech economy. The new jobs will require highly educated workers who will retrain frequently to keep up with the technology. They will go through several cycles of work and re-skilling to be able to prosper in the workforce.

Canada's competitiveness in the global economy depends on embracing technology to boost productivity. Between 2001 and 2016, the number of workers required to generate \$1,000,000 in revenue, dropped from 9.9 to 8. Canadian industries need to invest in technology to boost production and remain competitive in the global economy. Another report

from the Brookfield Institute, "Better, Faster, Stronger", lays out a roadmap for how this can be done. There will be opportunities if business and government cooperate with each other.

It all begins with healthy, strong, well-educated citizens who can take on the challenges of participating in the high-tech economy. How well is Canada doing? Our current support systems fail miserably at providing enough income for people to stay healthy. Social assistance rates are totally inadequate. The Employment Insurance system is so complex with regulations and wait times, that it makes it very difficult for people to access income replacement while they prepare for new jobs. **People need good health, economic stability and training opportunities to compete.**

A basic income that provides enough for health and stability for Canadians could go a long way to boosting our chances to succeed in the global economy. **A basic income would allow people to have decent housing, nutritious food and other basic needs, so they can be healthy and open to opportunities to participate in the community and skill training.** People say that you can't just solve it with money. Of course, there are many elements to succeeding in the global economy but it begins with a healthy population. A Basic Income Program is a good start. All Canadians deserve a chance.

*Conry Wink, National Social Justice Committee
Ontario Regional Council*

Resources:

Health Care in Canada: What makes us sick? CMA report 2013

Welfare in Canada 2016, Caledon Institute Maytree Foundation Nov 2017

The talented Mr. Robot: Impact of Automation on Canada's workforce, Brookfield Institute 2016

Better, Faster, Stronger: Maximizing the benefits of automation for Ontario's firms and people, Brookfield Institute 2018

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN OUR SOCIETY AND HOW REGIONAL COUNCILS CAN OFFER SUPPORT

As our founder Frédéric Ozanam stated, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has to focus on both charity and justice; charity alone is not enough. The society is concerned not only with alleviating immediate need but also with identifying the injustices that cause it. Both Pope Francis and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam said, **“Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice’s role to prevent the attack.”**

In Ontario, we encourage conferences to have a social justice representative and to have social justice as an agenda topic at their meetings. We also encourage councils to have a social justice committee made up of the social justice representatives from their conferences. The Social Justice Committee is now developing an action plan to provide ideas to these social justice representatives on what could potentially be done within their community to give our friends in need the dignity and wellness they deserve.

It is important to have support on raising social justice awareness at all levels of the Society, from the conference level to the particular and central councils to the regional level to the national level.

Here are some examples of how regional presidents can provide support:

- Share information on social justice topics in your regular communications sent out to your presidents.
- Include information about social justice when providing information/reports to bishops and priests.
- Include social justice as a topic when giving presentations/talks to councils and conferences in your region.
- When talking to SSVP members at all levels, include social justice information.

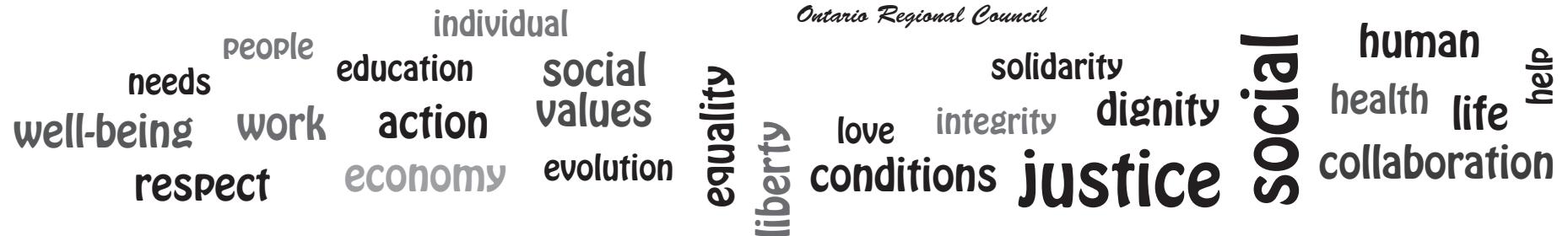
- Have a social justice representative on your Regional Board and executive team.
- Have committees involved at the regional level to raise awareness of social justice issues.

We are fortunate in Ontario that the number of social justice representatives increased from 21 in 2016 to 49 in 2017. This is thanks to the hard work and efforts of Jim Paddon, National Social Justice Chair, and Corry Wink, Ontario Regional Council Vice-President of Social Justice/Advocacy. We have an Ontario Social Justice Committee and Advocacy Committee who meet three times a year to brainstorm on how to raise more awareness and bring about action on social justice and advocacy issues and develop ways to give our friends in need the dignity and wellness they deserve. Ontario also has a Systemic Change Committee that raises awareness of systemic change projects to address the root causes of poverty to help our friends in need, and a Prison Ministry/Restorative Justice Committee to help support inmates and returning citizens, once released from prison.

Social justice is a topic that is of interest to youth and engages them, giving them a project that they are passionate about. Ontario has active youth members who sit on the National Social Justice Committee and present workshops when invited. They did a social justice workshop at the national AGA in St. John’s, Newfoundland entitled “From Charity to Social Justice” which was very well done.

Social justice representatives and committees should have the full support of their regional council. This is extremely important in order to deliver the message to all Vincentians that social justice is just as important as charity in order to bring about dignity and wellness for our friends in need.

*Linda Dollard, President
Ontario Regional Council*



SEEDS OF HOPE PROJECT RELAUNCH!

Seeds of Hope is focused on being the **link between Awareness to Access**, giving much-needed hope to the families we serve. We continue to work to perfect our role as **“Informed Navigators”**, connecting and referring families into programs, opportunities and services that can help lead them toward a healthier and more sustainable future. First, we become aware, then we make the families aware and, most importantly, we walk alongside them to help them connect with the opportunities.

Colleen, a single mom we serve, was reluctant to take steps to receive the education funds for her children because she was afraid there might be an impact on her other government funding. But we gently guided her through the process and now all four of her children have access to a total of \$8,000 toward their post-secondary education. The congratulations certificates are now hung proudly in her children’s’ bedrooms.

The Canada Learning Bond (CLB) is the main focus of the Seeds of Hope Project. Dental Care and Recreation are secondary but key components of it. We are now entering year seven of the project and, if you haven’t already started, I encourage you to begin by helping just one child and it will grow from there. I am available to share our lessons learned and to support you and your team.

Recent enhancements were made to the Smartsaver online application to streamline the enrolment process of the family connecting to an RESP service provider of their choice. This is a positive step forward and will help us to help the families access these funds and this wonderful hope for a brighter educational future.

Dental Care is a secondary but critical focus of Seeds of Hope. So many of the SSVP families are suffering from the effects of unmet dental needs that poverty causes.

Marissa had been suffering from extensive toothache, discomfort when eating and ill health due to dental neglect. With the help of an informed member of SSVP, she has gone through the regional dental screening process and been connected to a dentist who is working through an extensive dental treatment plan with her.

Resources:

Please sign up for the Seeds of Hope Champions email distribution to stay informed of new and exciting developments with the project.

Here are links to the Seeds of Hope toolkit on the Ontario website. Hard copies of the resources are available upon request.

ssvp.on.ca/rc/resp/pdf/SSVP_Volunteer_info_sheet_dec2015.pdf

ssvp.on.ca/rc/resp/seedsofhope.html

A bilingual toolkit is available on the national website and here are the links to follow.

www.ssvp.ca/fr/semences-despoir - www.ssvp.ca/seeds-hope

Here is a link to the SSVP dental toolkit for more guidance on how to assist with dental care <http://members.ssvp.on.ca/en/bestpractices.php?item=27>

Her anxiety and the cost of going to the dentist kept her from seeking the care she and her children badly needed. With support, her three children are now accessing regular dental services through Ontario Healthy Smiles dental program.

Many volunteers are not aware that dental care is free to all eligible children 17 and under in Ontario and other provinces.

Recreation is also a secondary but important focus. Many families are not accessing these programs due to low awareness.

Little James watches the Karate Kid movie every day and his mom Amanda didn’t realize he could attend Tae Kwon Do classes with the help of \$600 per year funding from Jump-start. We took the time to explain the application process and, after asking for a discount from the studio, both James and his brother are now attending classes and can go up to five times per week. It’s a safe haven home away from home.

Sandra didn’t realize she could access \$300 per year from the Municipality recreational fee assistance program. With some guidance, she was able to buy a six-month unlimited swim and skate pass for herself and her five children to enjoy.

Let SSVP be the link to access for the families we serve. A recreational toolkit is in the works, so please stay tuned.

Please just start - one family, one child at a time!

Linda Alexander, Seeds of Hope Project Manager

Lmja@bell.net seedsofhope@ssvp.ca 905-483-4876

YOUTH

What is suicide? What is mental health? Believe it or not, these are frequently asked questions. Suicide is **“the act or an instance of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally”**. Mental health is **“a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional wellbeing”**. However, there is so much more to suicide and mental health than those definitions.

I recently had the opportunity to visit Queen’s Park with my fellow Girls’ Government members. Girls’ Government was a program started by Peggy Sattler, former MPP. This program gave Grade 8 girls the opportunity to have a voice on global issues. In the program, we debated among the seven of us which global issue was best to take to Queen’s Park. We finally decided on suicide prevention in youth.

I believe my voice does not have to stop with the end of my Queen’s Park visit. I feel that we need to talk about suicide prevention, not just in youth, but for all ages. The reason we talk about suicide and mental health together is because often suicide is triggered by mental illness.

About 3,600 people die by suicide in Canada each year; that is about 10 suicides per day. Approximately one-quarter of First Nations adults reported contemplating suicide at some point in their life. These alarming rates have also been reported among young First Nations girls, who are dying by suicide at the rate of 35 per 100,000 people, while non-Aboriginal girls had a rate of just 5 per 100,000.

Of the 3,319 who died by suicide, 60 were homeless and 230 were precariously housed (seeking housing with friends or relatives or living day to day with money options running out). It is alarming that people living in these tough situations tend to attempt suicide and/or die by suicide at these rates. Targetted suicide prevention strategies should aim to address the factors specific to homeless people.

Research shows us that suicide is a problem for all ages, both genders, all backgrounds, and all people regardless of where or how they live. I believe that in order to help save people from ending their lives, we need to educate them on suicide and mental health. I did not learn about suicide and mental health until becoming a part of the Girls’ Government Program, and that was in Grade 8. **We need to teach people at a young age about mental health, and about the signs of suicide.** If we are able to recognize these signs and, in doing so, become suicide aware, then we could possibly save a life.

When we went to Queen’s Park one focus was to make mental health curriculum mandatory for all grades, beginning with social-emotional learning for primary students, mental health

promotion for grades 4-6, suicide prevention and awareness for grades 7 and above, and suicide-awareness training for secondary school students.

In order to do that, we need to provide funding to develop age-appropriate, evidence-based curriculum resources, provide funding to support teacher professional development on the new mental health curriculum, and incorporate mental health training into teacher education programs delivered by Ontario Faculties of Education.

**“WHEN GOD PUSHES YOU
TO THE EDGE OF DIFFICULTY
TRUST HIM FULLY
BECAUSE TWO THINGS
CAN HAPPEN
EITHER HE’LL CATCH YOU
WHEN YOU FALL,
OR
HE WILL TEACH YOU
HOW TO FLY”**

Did you know that one in 20 people are thinking about suicide at any given time? **The thoughts cannot be prevented, but the action can be.** Most people give a cry for help before attempting suicide. Very few people give no clues to suicide; therefore, it is important to recognize these desperate cries for help. We have many supports for people and families who have been affected by suicide. **The problem is that people are afraid to speak up due to the stigma associated with suicide, causing**

people to worry about being perceived as weak.

What can we do to help? **It is important to learn about the signs of suicide, and not be afraid to talk about it.** There is no shame in feeling suicidal. Life can get very messy and challenging, and if you do not have a support system, or people to talk to, it can be easy to think about giving up. It is important to remember that for all the reasons why someone might think to commit suicide, there will always be more reasons why not to and we are in charge of bringing light to these reasons for those who need it.

Adria Gioiosa, youth member from London



MISSION

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is:

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

VALUES

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians we:

- see Christ in anyone who suffers
- come together as a family
- have personal contact with the poor
- help in all possible ways.

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