

## CHANGING TIMES - MAY 2020

### SAFE, SECURE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

As I write the May *Changing Times* report, we are all experiencing the challenges of dealing with COVID-19 and the uncertainty of when it will ease or, hopefully, end. There will also be more uncertainty as we begin to recover from the pandemic, assess the status of our SSVP councils and conferences, and look at how we return to some level of normalcy. I hope and pray that our lives will have improved by the time this edition is published.

I can't help but consider how the title of these newsletters, *Changing Times*, aptly describes how things are today. COVID-19 has resulted in almost daily change in our lives as we have adapted to mass closures of businesses, schools, public services and recreational activities. Who would have imagined our churches closing? These changing times have also caused extensive cancellations of meetings, events and other social gatherings. Thousands of people are working fewer hours or simply not working.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has always been an organization based on the personal contact we have with those in need, which allows us to experience seeing Jesus Christ in all such interactions. Many conferences have found alternative ways to at least get help to our neighbours in need, but we have been unable to enjoy the face-to-face camaraderie typical of our regular conference meetings.

Still, the crisis has produced a few positive things. We are fortunate to have the means to conduct meetings online, and perhaps this will become more popular as a safe and less expensive way of conducting business. Various organizations and businesses have implemented the work-from-home option for their staff. I have also been encouraged by the high level of collaboration by the federal, provincial and municipal governments in dealing with COVID-19.

While our healthcare system has faced some challenges, it has allowed for a coordinated and consistent response to a crisis such as this. We've had more "down time" to spend with family at home or perhaps get caught up on various SSVP matters. It has also been a time for me and, I'm sure, for many others to contemplate a future that moves away from material wealth and focuses on the important things in life ... family, faith, hope, equality and human dignity.

Let us also pray for our healthcare workers and anyone working in essential services during these times that COVID-19 has created for all of us.

#### **Updates on the National Action Campaign**

Our national board of directors met via Teams online on April 4 and 5. Approval was given to continue developing the action campaign. In my report, I informed the board that our original plan to begin rolling out the campaign in the fall of 2020 has been moved back to early 2021, dependent on COVID-19.

The campaign committee met on April 16 via Teams rather than at our planned in-person meeting. We reviewed comments from regions and several councils who had

received a draft of the action plan in January 2020. There were many good comments and recommendations, which we will include in plan revisions. We shall distribute the action plan with several updates to regions in late May, asking that they make further comments as part of our commitment to communicate effectively with all councils/conferences during the preparatory phase of the campaign.

Four important components are needed to make this campaign a success. Firstly, we must gain the support and involvement of councils and conferences across Canada. Secondly, as we develop the Handout section of the action plan, it would help to have regional submissions on a particular action. Thirdly, we need to use our current network of social justice reps and, in fact, expand it to as many councils/conferences as possible. Finally, included in our efforts over the coming months to expand this social justice network, we shall be working with councils to identify current or new members or volunteers who can take on the role of a champion.

The champion would help coordinate efforts at their regional or council level and act as a liaison between our grassroots membership and the national campaign committee. A full description of the champion's role will be available by the end of May. If anyone requires more information on being a social justice rep or a campaign champion, please contact me at [jpssvp@hotmail.ca](mailto:jpssvp@hotmail.ca) or [sj-nac@ssvp.ca](mailto:sj-nac@ssvp.ca).

May God bless our members and their families and the thousands of Canadians working on the front lines during this pandemic.

Sincerely,

*Jim Paddon, Chair  
National Social Justice Committee*