



Remarks on my candidacy for SSVV President
by Jeff Kucharski, Vice President - Governance
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Hello and Bonjour!

Je m'excuse de ne pas pouvoir parler français, mais j'apprécie vraiment communiquer avec nos membres francophones, donc je ferai de mon mieux à l'avenir.

Hi everyone, I'm Jeff and I am a member of Sacred Heart Conference in Victoria, BC and have been a Vincentian for about 15 years, serving in various roles as a member, as Particular Council President and currently for the past three years as Vice President-Governance at National Council. I won't go over my resume as you can reference that on our website.

I do want to say that I am humbled and honoured to be in the company of all the nominees for President here today and grateful for all those here today who are taking the time and opportunity to listen to all of us and ask questions. I think it is wonderful that there are three qualified candidates here and it has been my privilege to work with them on National Council over the past 3 years.

I also want to thank Linda Dollard for her inspiring leadership and unfailing support for the work I have been entrusted to do over these past 3 years as Vice President – Governance. I have learned much from Linda, especially about listening to the membership, responding to their concerns and ideas and dealing with members and the Board in a fair and balanced way, always reflecting our Vincentian values.

I have also learned a great deal about our wonderful organization, the great variety of good works we do across this big country, and the amazing people that keep our Society relevant to the ever-increasing needs in our communities.

As VP Governance, I feel that I have been able to help make significant progress on developing and leading initiatives that will help keep our Society strong and effective. This includes a wide variety of governance related issues over the past 3 years. This includes responding to the need to address the many risks facing the Society in our increasingly complex world. I have initiated and/or led a number of initiatives to review our bylaws, through a National Bylaw review, in order to ensure bylaws of our councils are aligned with both the Rule and the requirements of federal or provincial regulations. Also, revising and proposing guidelines such as insurance guidelines, home visit guidelines and currently a

Safeguarding policy that will soon be communicated. These policies are meant to help manage risks facing the Society and strengthen the governance of our Society that faces so many challenges in responding to risks, government regulations and changing needs of those we serve.

Through a new national Governance Renewal Initiative, we are reviewing the structure of our Society in Canada to put the proper authorities in place to ensure continued compliance with federal CRA rules and manage our risks as we put into place legal agreements with all incorporated councils in Canada to better align bylaws, not-for-profit laws, and the Rule.

Working closely with Linda, I have also been deeply involved in helping resolve occasional disputes and differences among our members and councils (as hard as it is to believe there are disagreements!), helping our Society to increase its solidarity and strengthening the governance frameworks and processes essential to the smooth functioning of the Society in Canada.

I have enjoyed my time on National Council, especially working with the outstanding and very talented National Council Board, and increased my knowledge of the Society, its members and its many activities, special works across Canada. But especially the passion and dedication of our members in their conferences which has been incredibly inspiring.

If elected as your President, my personal style will be first to listen and seek to understand the issues, concerns and priorities of our Vincentian members and then to develop clear direction and priorities based both on what I have heard from our members and Board, and my own view on the best way to proceed. I will be guided by my experience, by our Vincentian mission and values and by my personal values (integrity, honesty, fairness, compassion, and effectiveness).

I would also add that spirituality is an essential element in our work in serving those in need. So I am inspired by the term “Faith in Action” because it very simply and clearly describes the gospel message of prioritizing both faith and works and goes to the heart of our movement. Bishop Mathieu spoke of the centrality of faith and action in his homilies to us, and I will hold to this principle in my actions.

As your President and from a practical point of view I will delegate responsibility and accountability to the members of the Board of National Council, and then support them by removing obstacles to their success and ensuring they have the resources and the means to carry out their activities.

At all times, I will in work collaboratively with others to carry out our mission, guided by the Society's and our Catholic values, and the Rule and statutes of the Society. (This includes the Standing Committees of the Board including: Executive, Finance, Twinning, Spirituality, Social Justice, Youth, Formation & Training, and North of 60 committees.)

I also want to stress my commitment to Servant Leadership: Our International Rule emphasizes the importance of "servant leadership" and the best example of this style was Frederic Ozanam, who was a model servant leader and whom I would try to emulate. I would do my best to reflect his example in my role as President. This means creating and nurturing an atmosphere where the talents, capacities and spiritual development of the members are identified, developed and put into service for those in need.

As a servant leader, I would emphasize listening to the views of our members and those we serve, prefer persuading over the use of authority, performing my functions with awareness and with an eye to the future in the best interest of the Society, practicing good stewardship by protecting and enhancing what has been entrusted to me and leaving the Society at the end of my term in a better position than it was when I first assumed the role.

Practically, I would rely on the advice and good ideas of all those who wish to strengthen our Society building upon the excellent initiatives of those currently on the National Board and modeled by our current President Linda whom it has been a pleasure to serve with.

In terms of my priorities as President,

I will maintain a clear focus on the goal of meeting the needs of those whom we serve, and will continue to support ongoing social justice and special works of the Society as developed and delivered by our conferences and councils in Canada. As President, I will also prioritize 5 areas:

- **Continuing the work already started to strengthen our organizational structure:** continue to improve governance, reduce risks and improve organizational effectiveness across Canada.
- **Membership rejuvenation:** Stem the steady decline in membership and conferences by promoting:
 - membership recruitment initiatives to rejuvenate conferences,
 - leadership development,
 - expansion of youth conferences and attracting young adults,
 - expanding membership to include all those who believe in our mission and values.
- **Spiritual formation:** Recognizing that as Vincentians we are called to a vocation, provide more opportunities to support the spiritual formation of our members and encourage strong relations between SSVP and Dioceses and parishes.

- **Fund-raising:** Modernize and develop our fund-raising activities by seeking new sources of funding and developing innovative events and initiatives to expand the reach of our programs.
- **Communications (both internal and external):** Effective communications to neighbors in need, donors, funders, members, supporters and partners is essential to sustaining ongoing support for the work we do in the communities we serve. I will advocate for developing a robust communications strategy for SSVP Canada.

Thank you.

Jeff Kucharski