

Dear brother and sister Vincentians

Yet another very successful Annual General Assembly 2009 in Waterloo has come and gone! Out thanks to Carmela Addante and Jason Hunt for their dedicated leadership in helping their team to make this year's event such a success! Way to go!

My thanks also to my administrative team and staff for their participation and help at the AGA. We are truly blessed with dedicated individuals such as these!

There is much to share in this issue of Vincenpaul. Many pictures of the membership enjoying the AGA itself, which is always such fun to remember.

Of course, of special interest are highlights of the purchase of our new head office in Ottawa with pictures as well. These are very exciting times.

In this issue, I will take the opportunity to share my annual report. I look forward to meeting with many of you throughout the year as well.

God bless each and every one of you with wisdom, understanding and strength as you continue on your Vincentian journey.

President's Annual Report April 1, 2008 To March 31, 2009

Again, this past year has been spent in cultivating ways to assist the Society to grow and realize its full potential. The ministry of administration continues to evolve as a caring and spirituality based mission that more clearly defines who we are as "people of the water and the towel" in the administration of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

As in the previous report, it would be worthwhile to provide a quick snapshot regarding the health of each area of the ministry of administration. Each committee, as you know will provide a more detailed report of its activities. It is not my intention to reiterate these reports.

Administration: (Strategic Direction)

Several key areas that are visible manifestations of this ministry included revising the administrative staffing. We continue with one full-time and one part-time. As of October 2008, we welcomed **Sandra Melo** as the new full time staff member, and **Nicole Schryburt** in the Montreal office remains part time. Sandra has been quite busy learning about the Society and how it functions. She attended a training program in Gatineau, Quebec. Our thanks to that group for their assistance. Sandra speaks English, French and Portuguese. She has a six year old son and lives in Ottawa.

Again, I have also been able to be present in the office for several days before all executive and board meetings, thus providing for better interactions, communications, staff meetings and coaching process for the staff.

Aggregations and Institutions

The defined process for Aggregations and Institutions and follow-up for inquiries has been working quite well. As you probably are aware, all certificates are now numbered for easier tracking.

Human Resources Committee under the leadership of **Clermont Fortin**, has also been very busy assembling all of the legal documentation requirements to practice due diligence as an employer that will care for our staff. Our employee benefits package has also been updated.

As always, a great vote of thanks to our staff, Nicole and Sandra, and to our consultants **Ghislaine Nord**, who does our translations sometimes with very little turnaround time notice, and to **Josée Laforest**, our graphic artist who does a great job of graphics and set up for our Vincenpaul magazine and other national council items such as the new brochures. We certainly appreciate all of you!

Board Orientation Day

The Board of Directors had two-day meetings both in November and May. The Friday of the November meeting is considered a **Board Orientation Day**. New board members learn all aspects of the administration of the National Council and meet the staff that assists members to learn their staff functions. As well, all board members learn their own role in the administration and communications between the national council board and the members of their regions.

Board Retreat Day

In May, the Friday is spent as a day of retreat/spirituality. The time is spent reflecting on the importance of who we are as stewards and members of the board and the members of the administrative team. We celebrate the gifts each of us brings to the ministry of administration and within the Society. The day begins with prayer and recitation of the rosary and ends with the celebration of Mass.

Also during this day the theme for the following year AGA is developed and decided upon along with possible workshop topics that will help to develop this chosen theme.

As members have stated, “a very full day and very worthwhile for both events”.

Spirituality Committee chaired by **Yvon Bussieres**, has been instrumental in making the May Retreat Day a very remarkable and edifying experience. Our **National Spiritual Advisor, Msgr Peter Schonenbach**, provides the insights needed to ground our decision-making both at the board level and at the

executive level. The terms of reference for this committee were expanded to allow for a number of spirituality focused areas to emerge. Under the strategic planning process one area identified was that “There are no visible signs of spirituality within the Society”.

Through the efforts of this committee measures are now taken to ensure that there ARE visible signs of spirituality within the Society. Yvon and his team will endeavor to ensure that Spirituality is a viable and visible presence at all Society gatherings and communications. This task does not rest with Msgr Peter alone, we all have a responsibility to animate the Spirituality of the Society! Yvon will have much more to report on this topic.

Education/Formation(StrategicDirection)

Under the leadership of **Carle Horne VP**, meetings and communications have taken place that will generate the results that the Strategic Planning had identified as important concerns for membership.

The establishment of the Education/Formation committee has begun to manifest signs as a very fruitful endeavour. Carol is very excited about the results over the last year and will have much to report.

Strategic Planning will also continue under **Carol Horne’s** leadership. It is so life-giving when strategic issues are identified and attained. This gives life to both the committee itself and the organization. As a council we have met objectives in a timely fashion with tangible results. This is due in most part to the dedication of all of you as members of the Society wanting to see the Society grow and flourish in your local areas. Carol will be having ongoing meetings at each AGA that will assist in continuing to develop the strategic planning process as a viable process to assist the Society in Canada toward healthy growth and sustainable vitality.

International Emergency/Disaster Relief remains under the stewardship of **Clermont Fortin, VP**. He will provide a complete report.

Twinning

Kathy Weswick, continues as the national chair. She and Nicole have worked very diligently to maintain the integrity of the twinning process for all concerned. Twinning has once again been very busy developing relationships and providing safe mechanisms that will see twinning connections made and the provision of monetary support find its way to those twins that rely on assistance both internally and externally outside Canada. Kathy will provide a comprehensive report.

Finance

The Finance Committee, chaired by **Marcel Tremblay VP**, has met a couple of times to develop processes that will provide for good stewardship of those funds that come to the national council for whatever reason. Our **Treasurer Germain**

Souigny and Francois Dufault, finance committee member, continue to be instrumental in assisting the administration of the national council with the development of practices that enable sustainability throughout the fiscal year.

You will remember, that last year I reported that the finance committee developed Financial Guidelines that will assist everyone to understand the basics of financial practices as they relate to the national council administration. These new guidelines have assisted in the annual council budget preparations.

Last year we budgeted \$240,000.00 in conference and council contributions for the last fiscal year 2008-09. I am pleased we attained 98% of the goal!!!

Bravo and congratulations to all of you that supported the national council in this fashion. A huge BRAVO to all of you that send more in order to help those conferences and councils that cannot afford to send the annual contribution! Together, we made a difference! The National Council of Canada now has the necessary resources to help the Society attain its mandate...to live the Gospel Message and help in all possible ways not only in Canada, but to all of our brother and sister Vincentians all over the world.!!!

Of further note:

The Vincenpaul Spring Issue contained an article that explained the necessity of the \$240.00 contribution to the national council. This was in response to questions posed by conference/council presidents. Of course, they have a right to know so I called it "a teachable moment". I asked Marcel, Finance Committee Chair, to help me write an article to help answer their questions. We received very positive responses, both from the article's value and obviously from the generous support to help us get to 98% of the goal.

Voice of the Poor - Advocacy

The Voice of the Poor Committee is now underway. Both **Clermont Fortin VP**, and **Michael Burke PP**, along with **Msgr Peter Schonenbach** have undertaken to make this committee an audible voice within the Society for and with the poor that we serve. Issues will come forward for input and action as the committee plans strategies to make our voice heard. There indeed will be no shortage of issues and concerns. There will be an orientation type meeting come October 2009 that will begin to set the pace and gain everyone's interest I am sure.

Youth Committee

Our Youth Committee is under the able leadership of **Caroline Gilbert**. Caroline attended the International Youth Conference in Salamanca Spain in the beginning of June 2008. There are some interesting opportunities for youth engagement in activities especially in the Western hemisphere. Caroline will also have a comprehensive report for all of you.

Board Administrative Communication

This aspect of administrative communication continues to be well provided for by having **Diane Pearson** continuing in her role as secretary of the board. Her knowledge of both French and English assists with the comprehensiveness of her minute taking. The time lines we have established have been working well for both the notices of meetings and the dissemination of minutes. **Sandra** remains the main facilitator throughout this process as she communicates with the translator **Ghislaine Du Nord**.

Communications/Public Relations (Strategic Direction)

Communications/Public Relations remains as one of the identified strategic directions that members identified as important for continued growth of the Society throughout the country. Last year, our National Council materials were developed to have the look of the organization in Canada. We have created a new Society of Saint Vincent de Paul National Council brochure, a new Twinning brochure, prayer cards, mission cards, etc, all with the distinctive international logo and blue and white colours that define the Society in Canada. As I travel around the country I can see the Society logo, colours etc being consistently utilized....we are becoming a recognized symbol in our communities.

As part of updating the communications element, we now have a 1 800 number for individuals to use when contacting us.

Website/Operations Manual (Strategic Direction)

The Operations Manual and Website: both of these have been updated. I have been told that more and more individuals are stopping and using the web site. We now have an on line donation format. Our thanks to **Nicole** for her diligence in managing that aspect for us.

Vincenpaul Magazine

Vincepaul Magazine continues to be managed by both **Nicole and Ellen Schryburt**. Both of these ladies have been gathering news stories and with the help of our translator and our graphic artist, have assembled a very informative magazine. We continue to receive a number of compliments on how well done it is. Thanks to each of you, **Nicole, Ellen, Ghislaine, and Josée** for your hard work.

A great big vote of thanks goes to all of you for submitting interesting articles...especially if there are pictures! Keep them coming!

Please Note

We continue to get a great deal of magazines returned to the national office as undeliverable. This can be due to deceased members, change of presidents etc.

Screening Process

Screening process is well underway in most regions. It is a tribute to those who have helped to make it all possible. Each region has truly worked diligently to ensure that the process is understood and is indeed moving forward.

President's Travel

As I reported in the Vincenzapaul Magazine I have attended meetings in Australia, Louisville KY, Haiti, Ottawa, Costa Rica, Calgary and Spain in June. These have been wonderful opportunities for me to see the many good works conducted in the name of the Society and to meet so many brothers and sisters. Presence means so much to all of these persons and taking the time to go to meet with everyone is very life giving to all concerned. What an invaluable resource we are to one another!

Council News Item

The house that belonged to the National Council that was located in Quebec City was finally sold in November 2008. However, since that time, our present landlord, the Archdiocese of Ottawa, has given us notice that they require the space that we presently occupy. Therefore we must vacate the premises by October 31, 2009.

The Executive Committee set about to determine what our space requirements would have to be.

Since commercial options are rather costly, the ideal would be to find another "house" that would accommodate administrative office space, meeting space, accommodation and office for the president and of course storage space and parking.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, in January 2009, we enlisted the help of a real estate agent, who is also a Vincentian, to assist us in finding such a place. He worked with us to find something that would suit our needs.

We are now pleased to report that we have found a suitable location that meets all of our requirements. It is a corner lot in the east side of Ottawa in a place called "Blackburn Hamlet", in a quiet neighbourhood. The really good news is that it comes all furnished and is in "move in" condition. This will also include with sufficient parking. It is close to transportation, train station and the airport. It is 5-10 minutes from the hotel that we use.

Michael Burke has conducted an engineering assessment and finds the home quite solid and a very worthwhile investment for the Society. Thanks Michael for your assistance!

A full report will be presented at the statutory meeting on the Saturday, complete with pictures!

Summation

I will endeavor to continue to assist my brother and sister Vincentians to continually move forward in sharing their gifts in the ministry of administration. For in sharing who we are as gifts, we become more of who we are! Those who receive our gifts in the spirit of good stewardship can only be graced and blessed with the desire to do more!

As always I pray that we may be, all one in truth and charity!"

Penny Craig, President
September 2009