

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2006-2007

Dear Brother and Sister Vincentians,

As I write my final Annual Report as National President for the activities of the National Council for the year 2006, final preparations for the AGA in Kelowna BC are underway. This year the Executive Committee of the National Council continued their excellent work for the good of the Society. It is truly an understatement to say that anyone could do this job without such tremendous support. Vice-presidents Clermont, Penny, Kathy, Treasurer Germain, Spiritual advisor Msgr. Peter, Past President Ellen, Youth Representative John and advisor Pierre, I thank you on my behalf and all Vincentians across the country for your dedication and service to the National Council.

New Regional Presidents

This past year has seen the end of terms for three Regional Presidents and the election of new Presidents. Marcel Tremblay the President of the Quebec Regional Council has completed his term and has been replaced by Jean-Claude Bienvenue from Joliette; Ontario Regional President Nick Volk has completed his term and John Staley from Windsor/Essex was elected; and Western Regional President Lynn L'Heureux has been replaced by Sister Pat Bennetto from Edmonton. We welcome the three new presidents to the Board of the National Council and look forward to working with each of them.

National Office and Executive Director

The National office is now entering its third year in Ottawa. Our office in the Ottawa Archdiocesan building allows us to accommodate meetings of our National Committees as well as Executive and National Board meetings. We have also hired a part-time secretary to assist with the clerical duties at the national office in Ottawa. This arrangement continues to work very well and at this time we are very pleased with the move.

National Rule Committee

The National Rule Committee has had a very busy and productive year completing and editing the National Rule.

I am pleased to report that The International Council General Rule Committee Chairman, David Williams has approved our new National Rule. It was indeed a pleasure to work with David as he led us through the minor revisions requested by the ICG to final approval. At this time we are finishing the final formatting and getting prices for printing. Given the ratification by our National Council last year in St. John's and now the approval by the ICG Rule Chairperson, we will be using the definition of "Voting Members" as described in the new Rule for the Kelowna meeting, and not the previous "Members by Right" defined in the previous Rule.

We again want to thank the National Rule Committee for their work over the past few years to accomplish this task. The committee included Viola Corbett (Atlantic Regional Council), Jean-Claude Bienvenue (Quebec Regional Council), John Staley (Ontario Regional Council), Don Hunter (Western Regional Council) and Barry Granary BC

Regional Council). In addition Vice-Presidents Clermont and Committee Chair Penny Craig were instrumental in keeping the production on schedule. And last but not least Editor Jacquelyne Lord and her husband Gerard who spent countless hours editing and writing the drafts of the report and coordinating the translation from English to French.

Thanks again to all who participated in this very important process and, without a doubt, without your tireless efforts the National Council would not have achieved its goal of producing the Rule for the Kelowna Meeting.

Screening

The National Council Executive Committee has developed a National Policy to facilitate the administration of the Society in Canada as well as to guide and protect the Society, its members, and those we serve, as part of the Council's "due diligence" to deal with "screening" members of the Society. Over the past few years, screening has become a reality for all organizations involved in service to others. The Archdiocese of Toronto initiated a screening requirement for all organizations working within the Archdiocese, which included the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The Central Council of Toronto was quick to react to this initiative and developed a very good screening plan for their Council. This model was used extensively in the development of the more generic National Policy. We are now well into the implementation stage for Screening and we are pleased to announce that the process is going very smoothly.

We encourage all members to read the policy on screening, and we encourage all Council and Conference presidents to use "common sense" and good judgment in the implementation of this policy (i.e. getting a police record check on an 85 year old person who has been a member for 45 years would be a lower priority and scheduled later in the implementation process). I would like to thank all those who attended the workshop, and grateful thanks to Chair Penny Craig and Vice President Clermont for their invaluable assistance and efforts in bringing this policy to conclusion. The remaining tasks are now clear for the Regions to implement this very important policy for the protection of all Vincentians, the Society and of course those we serve.

Support for the National Council

Last year we reported on the Policy of the National Council dealing with financial support of the National Council enabling us to carry out our activities and outreach. This policy stated that the National Board of Directors would approve an amount of money suggested as an annual amount to be voluntarily contributed to the National Council by all Conferences. The National Executive will again suggest an amount to the National Board for approval at the May Board of Directors meeting. The National Council will then issue a letter to the Regional Councils asking them to forward the National Council request to their Councils and Conferences. Last year, the recommended contribution amount from Conferences was \$240.00 per year.

We encourage all members of the Society to read the Annual Report of the Society to view the activities of the National Council. The work of managing and governance of the Society at the National level continues, for the most part unnoticed by most Vincentians. Twinning continues to take a lot of time with correspondence (in different languages), money transfer follow-up on the receipt of the money etc., all of which takes time and effort (= money).

The National Board meets three times a year and the Executive committee twice; again this involves cost for travel accommodations food etc. The Executive and the Board communicate with the membership through the Vincenpaul and newsletters. The National Council has a responsibility as a member of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to support the ICG financially (something we have not done very well over the past 15 years). Canada as a bi-lingual country has two official languages, and as such everything that we produce is produced in both French and English. This is not something that we do as a favour to either language, but as a RIGHT to all Canadian citizens, and we are proud to do so.

We do all of this and more as part of our mandate and responsibility as a National Council. But (there is always a but) this all costs money. We should be very proud of our record on our expenditures at the National Council level. I believe that there is no other Council in the world that does as much as the Council of Canada with the resources we have. We are indeed very pleased to inform the membership that this past year we received the equivalent of 75% compliance to the request for Conference contributions. We want to take this opportunity to THANK all Councils who have participated and to encourage 100% participation across the country. The current trend bodes well for the financing of the Society for the next few years.

National Logo goes International

The National Council of Canada has now completely converted to the International Logo which was approved by the ICG in 2002, this conversion includes letterhead banners and business cards. Many Councils in the country are also converting to the new Logo, painting trucks and changing signs, etc. This conversion to the ICG Logo brings the Canadian Society closer together within the country and creates much closer ties to the rest of the International Confederation of the Society around the world.

As I complete my 6 year term as President, (where has the time gone?) I again wish to thank the three Vice-Presidents - Clermont Fortin, Penny Craig and Kathy Weswick for their dedicated work on the National Council Executive and for their friendship over these six busy years. I offer congratulations to in-coming president Penny Craig and encourage all Vincentians to give her the same support encouragement and prayers you have awarded to me during my term. May Penny and her team continue to guide this wonderful organization that welcomes us as members to nurture each other and to serve the poor in His name.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Burke, President
National Council of Canada