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SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL  
NATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

# Changing Times

## Changing Times

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On behalf of the National Social Justice Committee, I would like to introduce our first edition of Changing Times, our quarterly national social justice newsletter. I would invite anyone with an interest in this important area of our work as Vincentians to join our mailing list for future editions. It is available to members and non-members. Our goal is to collaborate across Canada on the various topics that come under the social justice heading while creating a network of communication and information for both members and the public. We welcome articles and comments on how we can improve future newsletters.

Our founder, Frederic Ozanam, was an ardent supporter of such issues as a living wage and worker pensions as well as being credited as one of the early voices within the Catholic Church towards the development of Catholic social teachings. As the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul began to grow from that one founding conference to the vision that Ozanam had of a network of charity, we too hope to grow a network of social justice across Canada whose goals will be to address the issues that keep people in poverty as well as developing programs aimed at

helping these new friends of ours to escape poverty, or at least find the hope that their children will have a better future. The concept of such a network also provides our grass roots conference levels to have a voice in social justice efforts at their local levels.

Collaboration is also a key component of any success we may achieve. There is a very strong emphasis on collaborating within the Society as well as the larger Vincentian family and its various branches. A collaborative effort regarding poverty can also occur in each community by having our local Vincentian working with other like-minded agencies, charities and organizations to address the barriers that keep people in poverty.

We invite you to subscribe to this newsletter and visit our national website to learn and share information about social justice. Our social justice committee includes such areas as Advocacy, Systemic Change, Prison Ministry, Refugee Efforts and Climate Change as well as other topics, both nationally and locally.

Please join us in our efforts.

Jim Paddon, Chair  
National Social Justice Committee  
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

## Goals of the Vincentian Family:

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To educate people on the basic concepts of Systemic Change, and to share information about what the Vincentian Family is doing world-wide.

To provide an opportunity for Vincentian Family Members to think creatively about what types of Systemic change projects could be started within their local community.

To think critically about an existing ministry in light of the Systemic Change concepts and to work on effecting a change within the existing service Model of a particular project.

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# Can We Afford Poverty?

The United Nations considers that forcing people to live in poverty is a violation of human rights and has called on the Canadian government to establish a poverty reduction strategy because Canada's response has been dismal. UNICEF rated Canada as 17th out of 29 wealthy countries due to the number of children who live in poverty. The people most likely to live in poverty are Aboriginals, racialized people, people with disabilities, single mothers and the elderly.

What many people don't know is that poverty is expensive. It costs our country more money to keep people in poverty than it would cost to provide incomes that would allow them to live with dignity and in good health. How can this be?

People who live on very low incomes cost the health care system more than people who have enough. People who live in poverty cannot afford nutritious food or safe, healthy places to live and the resulting stress causes greater mental and physical illness among them than in the general population. According to Canada Without Poverty, Canadians pay \$7.6 billion more for health care due to our high poverty rates. Surely, it

*UNICEF ranked Canada  
17 out of 29 wealthy countries  
due to our child poverty rate*

makes sense to put some of that money into affordable housing or food programs.

People who live in poverty spend more time in prisons than other people. It is not so much that they commit more serious crimes but rather that poor people can't afford lawyers or make a good



impression on the court. This often leads to longer sentences. Aboriginal and racialized people are particularly vulnerable to receiving harsher sentences but anyone who comes from a poverty background is at risk. It costs a lot of money to keep people in prison. Saskatchewan alone spends between \$50 million and \$120 million per year on the criminal justice system. What if we put some of that money into welfare programs?

There is so much lost potential when children grow up in poverty. The lack of nutritious food, good housing and enrichment that comes from books, participation in sports and cultural activities mean that these children will

never be competitive with their peers in terms of self-confidence or social skills. Fees for tuition at university or college mean that higher education is pretty much out of the question for people who grow up in poverty. It is very unlikely that these children will ever achieve good employment and be able to contribute to society. Research suggests that every dollar invested in child welfare saves \$9 in future costs.

There are sound economic reasons for addressing poverty because it actually costs less to give people the resources to live in dignity. Every day, Vincentians see the unacceptable suffering that poverty imposes on our fellow Canadians. We need to work towards a better social welfare system for today and for our future.

## References:

Canada Without Poverty website, [www.cwp-csp.ca](http://www.cwp-csp.ca)

Justice and the Poor: National Council of Welfare, 2000

What makes us Sick: Canadian Medical Association, 2013

~ Corry Wink,  
Social Justice Coordinator, Eastern Area  
Ontario Regional Council  
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

## Social Justice Committee Mission Statement:

- \* To proclaim the Christian response to all forms of injustice.
- \* To bring about positive change in people's lives by deepening the understanding of the ways that all forms of poverty deprives people of their dignity, their health, and the opportunity to participate fully in society.

# Nunavut Experience: October 19-28, 2015

## The Inuit People

For the greater part, the Inuit people are concerned, hopeful, and deeply family and community rooted. They have been tossed into our southern culture/values that are rooted in the Inuit ways. The elders are deeply respected and adhered to, and because of this pivotal relationship things won't change for a while YET. There is so much hope and faith in our southern actions of help.

Father Marcin and I began to express our southern help as, sharing ... that



Father Marcin, one of the many people Pegg met with on her journey north

those who have more in the south would like to share with the people of north in need.

There is an inherent belief that the south is wealthy and we can 'simply'

give to the north. We can, however it must be done as sharing rather than doling out goods. We need to remain in their lives as people unto each other – more than a shipment of goods.

There is also a deep rooted belief and support system in their Catholic faith. In Rankin, the Catholic Church, through Fr. Marcin, has worked very hard to rebuild trust and make the church truly 'their' church - a place to pray, sing together and, most important that the Church has not abandoned them.

## The Inuit as Family and Community

Family is incredibly important ... and in some way everyone is related. Using food as an example: when the cheques arrive, food is purchased and eaten until gone. Then a family will travel to a relative's and share in that food until gone and this cycle continues. This is the old way, the way of the elders. If you have, without question, you share,

*If you have, you share,  
without regard for tomorrow*

without regard for tomorrow when hunger will exist again. Family does that for each other! Our assistance will not cure this thinking. As the youth become educated to wiser means – their families might hold to better ways, better hope. Time and our continued presence will encourage better practices.

When a family is waiting for housing because none is available, families move in

with relatives. A 3 bedroom home often has a full family per room ... causing all too often greater stress on food supplies and unsafe relationships.

The schools have a breakfast program that greatly helps families. Often children get up themselves and go to school to have food. There is an afternoon snack before going home. All children go home for lunch – some get to eat, some come home to parents still in bed.

## The Question:

### “How Do You Believe the South Can Help in the North?”



*Imagine paying this much for milk for your children ...*

I met with social workers, principals, guidance counsellors, a women's sewing group, community agencies who shared the same problems but gave the depth of the hardship ... conversations flowed. Each group's first statement was of thanks for wanting to help and recognizing the need.



*...or paying this much just for laundry soap*

# Nunavut Experience: Rankin Inlet

Rankin Inlet is the hub of the Kivalliq Area – everything runs by Rankin. The opportunity for work is greater here than most communities – thus many people try to ‘make it’ in Rankin but the spaces are so limited.

There are governmental jobs, paying a very good salary, offering a life style for some equal or better than some residents of Ontario. These jobs have an attached northern allowance that alone surpasses the average salary of the Inuit people (these jobs are taken by the non-Inuit).

## HOUSING

Housing is very limited. It is difficult to build on rock and getting heavy supplies from the south only happens three times a year. The conditions to be accepted for a housing unit have caused heartache. Firstly, you must be 18 and own no property anywhere else in the north. Some Inuits have had to surrender ‘family land’ in order to qualify in the city. The wait time is on average a 6 year wait ... Assisted housing is supplied with washers, dryers, and microwaves, but they must provide beds,

dishes, etc., and all electronics ... All very costly.

There are families in Rankin who own their homes. They face an added problem - electricity. In order to have running water, sewage pipes, the pipes must be wrapped with wires to keep the pipes from freezing. Even here, choices are made where money is spent.

## COUNTRY FOOD

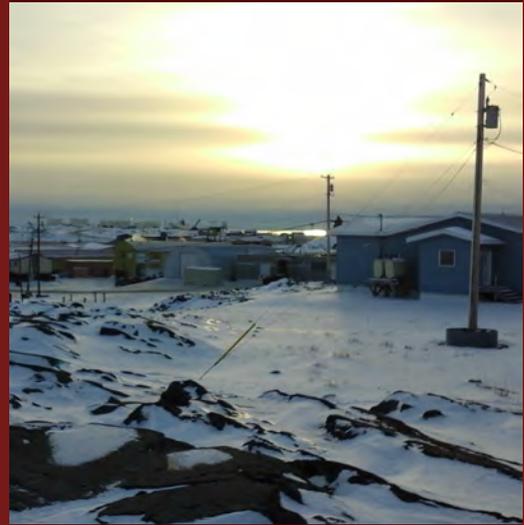
Hunting and fishing are very difficult for the peoples of Rankin. A trip can be a 4+ hour ride away. Gasoline is priced annually – no variance (currently \$1.29). The quality of outer wear, to be able to remain outside, is imperative and very costly.

There are NO TREES, thus making a sled is a task ... The elders long for country food ...

## YOUTH HARDSHIP

The children are inside for a long winter. Most homes have all the video games, huge TV's to help overcome the boredom. A youth center attached to the church would really help for the Rankin youth. A place to safely grow within a positive, supportive environment, a place that could provide lunch for those with none, after school sew-

ing (desperately needed), movies, a few basketball hoops \*\* This may sound outrageous – but a structure like this would help with many of the difficulties faced daily.



## RANKIN INLET

Population approximately 3000

Features:

2 Food Stores: Co-Op & Northern

2 Quick Marts with attached Tim Horton's Coffee Bar

Elementary, Middle & High Schools

Technical School,

Artic College (Business); Nunavut College ... Satellite

Ice Rink / Radio Station is on the upper level

Health Center; Library (books, 7 computers)

Catholic Church with Fr. Marcin as their parish priest

# Nunavut Experience: Whale Cove



## WHALE COVE

Population approximately 400

Features:

1 General Store: Co-Op

Combined elementary / high school

Health Center

Whale Cove is directly situated on the water. Although there are many similarities with Rankin Inlet, there are as many differences. There are next to no opportunities for work.

Hunting is somewhat easier because the animals come in closer, however, money is tighter and the expenses are basically the same.

## HARDSHIPS

The availability for clothing is absurd. The Co-Op has VERY little to offer. The women are amazing sewers and knitters; however purchasing material is very expensive.

Affording the materials to hunt and/or fish is a true hardship for the men. It is their duty to provide the country meat – especially for

the elders.

Travel can only be done by plane, even if it's a trip to Rankin for supplies.

Vehicles:

Hondas, ski-dos, are vital to the community. Maintenance and gasoline are costly. Once more a sled is a priority but difficult to obtain. Only some families own ski-dos, vehicles are a rarity.

## HOUSING

Housing is very limited. It is again common to have more than one family living in a unit. An example – a family of 7, in a 2-bedroom unit, accepted her sister, brother-in-law and 8 children. In time, the sister and family will be added to

the housing wait list. Again, if you are a recipient of a housing unit you are lucky.

In Whale Cove, water is supplied almost daily, sewage is suctioned on an almost daily basis, and oil is delivered on an as needed basis. Owned homes exist, but are rare and difficult to maintain.

## FOOD

Country food is available but not sufficient to sustain a village. There are many, many hungry children. The school provides daily a big breakfast, and late day snack. The most consistent food supply comes from Sister Dorica and Sister Fernande, at the church. The sisters receive the children 5 days a week, from 3:45 – 9pm. In this time the children are feed soup, toast and peanut butter, and Tang upon arrival. Games, mass, and crafts are done and the children are fed cereal, before they go home. What is done at school and the Sister's Mission is a huge food help. Again we need to adopt the mission.

The sisters have VERY little room for storage. If we could afford to buy a small sea container – Sister could do more than after school food for the children.

The adults will accept going hungry but not for the children. Sunday mass is completed with soup, buns, and bannock. Tea and Tang is an important part too.

Whale Cove does not have a resident priest. Several weeks can pass without a mass but a prayer service always happens.

There is very little for the youth... actually next to nothing. The area has RANGERS – an organization that teaches the teenagers the country ways.

My recommendation for Whale Cove is to adopt the Sister's Mission. This way the children would be fed daily and families on Sunday. The sisters have asked for food help, games, coloring tools, coloring posters, games, easy read books. Nothing would go amiss if we did this for the sisters.

~ Pegg Leroux, North of 60, Ontario Regional Council

# SEEDS OF HOPE SYSTEMIC CHANGE PROJECT

*YOU CAN HELP MAKE EDUCATION SAVINGS  
A REALITY FOR SSVP FAMILIES - WE NEED ONE  
VINCENTIAN PER CONFERENCE TO STEP FORWARD!*

Statistics show that youth with at least some savings earmarked for education are 50% more likely to pursue post-secondary education (full time or part time studies in apprenticeship, CECEP, college, trade school, or university) than those with none.

The Canada Learning Bond is a kick-start contribution into the Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) of children from families living on lower incomes providing eligible kids with anywhere from \$500 to \$2,000 in savings with no family contribution required. It's literally free money for families to get savings started!

Yet nationally almost 7 out of 10 eligible children have not received these funds due to **low awareness and barriers to access**. This is even lower for

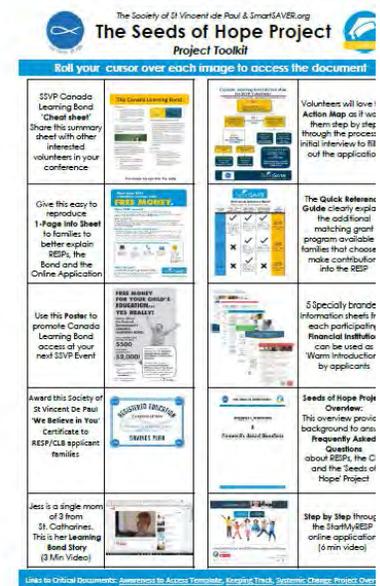
families SSVP serves currently!

Since the inception of the systemic change project in 2012, the Halton Particular Conference has helped over 100 children gain access to education savings like the Canada Learning Bond. With the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul's network of more than 800 conferences nationally, we could help an estimated 40,000 more access this free money.

Education is one of the most critical determinants in helping to break out of the cycle of poverty. Savings can be a catalyst for change. They can **change the dialogue** to an expectation of continuing on to post-secondary. They can also lead to scholarships and bursaries and other forms of financial aid.

The **Canada Learning Bond** provides up to \$2,000 in **free money** for post-secondary education planting the **Seeds of Hope** for a brighter educational future.

A **Seeds of Hope volunteer toolkit** is at [www.ssvp.on.ca](http://www.ssvp.on.ca)



Seeds of Hope's focus is to raise awareness and increase access to the Canada Learning Bond.

Additionally, the project will provide resource information on dental health, recreational, back to school and other programs.

Please access the toolkit and reach out to Linda Alexander, Seeds of Hope Project Coordinator, at [lmja@bell.net](mailto:lmja@bell.net) or 905-483-4876

# Let's Talk

...about affordable housing

*To integrate a short discussion about Social Justice into your meeting, we suggest you choose one or two points to talk about and set a time limit.*

*How do the points discussed apply to the neighbours you serve?*

*Some people think...*

- Government should not get involved in the housing business.

*But the reality is...*

- Housing Affordability (rental or ownership) for many is becoming out of reach. In Canada Social Housing accounts for only 5% of the housing stock (2% in the U.S.). In Western Europe it accounts for 20% - 30%.
- Canada is the only member of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development that does NOT have a National Housing policy.
- When a family spends too much of their limited income on housing, there is not enough left over to afford a healthy lifestyle.

*So now what?*

- Who controls the supply of housing right now?
- Should we build more public housing or provide subsidies for people to rent in the private market?
- Is home ownership the ultimate solution?

*What are some other assumptions about affordable housing?*



**SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL  
NATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE  
COMMITTEE**

For more information, contact:

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

To subscribe to this newsletter, contact

Sarah Davidson,  
Administrative Assistant,  
Ontario Regional Council  
sarah.ssvp@bell.net

Check us out online at:  
[www.ssvp.ca](http://www.ssvp.ca)

## The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

### 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.

## Working for Social Justice

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the injustices that cause it. Therefore, it is committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice.

Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, Vincentians envision a just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted. The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those in need who are suffering from injustice. The Society helps those in need to speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on their behalf so that they will not be ignored.

The Society opposes discrimination of all kind and strives, through charity, to foster new attitudes of respect and empathy for the weak, for people of different cultures, religions and ethnic origins, thus contributing to the peace and unity of all the peoples of the world.

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future and looks towards sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations. (Rule)

Jim Paddon, President,  
Ontario Regional Council

## [ Have Your Say ]

Admittedly, this first issue is largely written from the Ontario members, but we want future editions to be representative of all Vincentian communities.

If you would like to submit a piece for a future issue, please send it to either Jim Paddon, [jpssvp@hotmail.ca](mailto:jpssvp@hotmail.ca) or Sarah Davidson, [sarah.ssvp@bell.net](mailto:sarah.ssvp@bell.net).

Comments and suggestions are also welcomed.

This newsletter is to unite us all across Canada, because together we can make a difference.