



Ontario Regional Council

Ontario Regional Council
585 York Street
London, ON
N6B 1R6
Email: pres.ontario@ssvp.ca
Website: www.ssvp.on.ca

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Ontario Regional Council Report

Our more than 5,000 members across Ontario were busy with various activities in 2018. Our members have been making home visits to persons in need, running Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) food banks and soup kitchens, and visiting the imprisoned and the sick. Our 45 stores across the province helped to fill vouchers that provided furniture, clothing and other basic necessities for many individuals. Our 3 SSVP camps offered a memorable camp experience for children, as well as the teenagers who volunteered as camp counselors.

Our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, said, "the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has to focus on both charity and justice." The society is concerned not only with alleviating immediate need but also with identifying the injustices that cause it. Both Pope Francis and Blessed Frederic Ozanam said, "Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is justice's role to prevent the attack." Systemic change is the process to implement changes to improve social justice and provide human dignity to those we serve. Projects working toward systemic change in Ontario include Seeds of Hope and the Ozanam Education Fund that help persons in need overcome the barrier of access to education. Dental and recreational programs are in place to increase access to much needed dental services as well as recreational programs for children. Vinnie's Wallet is a program offering interest-free mini-loans to individuals dealing with an emergency financial need who cannot get a loan from the bank.

Hamilton offers a Prison Release Kit Program where kits that help meet basic needs are provided to returning citizens (former inmates) once released from prison. We help in all possible ways.

We encourage every conference and council to have a social justice representative to help educate our members on social justice and discuss ways to implement systemic change projects within their community.

The Rejuvenation Committee has developed tools and resources to assist with some of the challenges faced by conferences and councils. A succession planning workshop helps conferences and councils identify and invite a person with the right skills to put their name forward to be president when the current president's term comes to an end. A recruitment workshop helps conferences identify recruitment strategies to invite members to join in order to meet the needs of their communities.

The Spirituality Committee has developed a resource binder that is shared with lay spiritual advisors when invited to do a workshop. Spirituality is at the core of everything we do, and it is critical that every conference and council have a spiritual advisor to help our members with their spiritual growth.

The North of 60 project shipped sea containers to 7 communities in Nunavut in 2018 helping our Inuit friends in the north. In addition to food, the sea containers contained sewing machines, hockey equipment and more. We ask and listen to our northern friends to know what items they need. We have also developed a relationship with our First Nations friends in the Moosonee and James Bay communities and sent food, warm clothing, sewing machines, material and hockey equipment to them.

Members from the Ontario Regional Council Executive (ONRC) team have been doing meet-and-greet sessions in communities to hear about the many activities that help our friends and neighbours, hear about their successes and challenges and how ONRC can provide support.

We encourage youth engagement in the works of the Society. Our youth representatives are available to provide information on how to get youth engaged. Social justice is a great point of access to recruit young members.

In 2019, Ontario will continue to focus efforts on spirituality, council and conference rejuvenation, member and youth recruitment, social justice and advocacy, and North of 60. We will also be sure to leverage our stores, as they are the face of the Society in the communities where they are located.

I am truly touched by the level of dedication and passion by our presidents and the commitment of our more than 5,000 members who believe in our mission and values of serving persons in need.

Thank you to our many members for all that you do to help serve our communities.

Linda Dollard, President
Ontario Regional Council

