



Social Justice

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul members, please follow this link to access the social justice resources: [Social Justice Resources](#)

Social Justice Committee Annual Report - June 2019

The social justice committee of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Canada seeks to address the root causes of poverty in Canada by advocating for changes in current systems and structures and by developing actions that can lead to the relief of poverty and provide a sense of hope and human dignity to every resident of Canada.

Systemic change and advocacy are ways we attempt to achieve these goals. There are several specific areas that are included in our efforts. These are housing and homelessness, social assistance reform, restorative justice/prison ministry, education, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and environmental change. There are certainly other worthwhile topics which we also consider.

In order to be successful, there is a need to raise the awareness level of our members towards social justice topics. In 2018 we were able to add several questions to the annual report about social justice. We have also increased the number of social justice representatives to almost 90 across Canada. We now have our social justice guide available on the national website, which provides information about the role of the social justice rep along with other resource materials. It is recommended that all meetings include social justice as an agenda item with the goal to initiate a discussion on various topics.

The former social justice newsletter, Changing Time is now a monthly online publication (except July/August). And the national Vincenpaul newsletter is dedicated to social justice in May and October each year. While social justice activities may not appeal to every Vincentian, we believe it can be

a very effective recruitment tool for new Vincentians as well youth. Social justice can be an attractive option for new members who may possess knowledge and interest in justice related issues and actions.

Our restorative justice/prison ministry is one area that seeks to help both the offender and the victims. Victims can be the victim of the crime and their family members, but it may also include the family of the offender. There is much more we can accomplish if we can attract additional members to join this area of social justice work.

Indigenous Peoples in Canada is another area that we have had success with. The North of 60 program assists Inuit communities in the Far North of Canada and we have had several activities on First Nations communities. I also represent the Society on the Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle which is a Catholic coalition dedicated to responding to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We encourage our members across Canada to look at ways you can educate your membership about Indigenous history, culture and faith traditions. Our committee hopes to develop resource material which any council/conference can use to take actions on.

National campaign -Housing and Homelessness. The national board has approved a 3-year national campaign on the issue of housing and homelessness. We are currently in year 1 which is the preparatory phase with years 2 and 3 to follow in 2020 and 2021. A major component of the campaign will be to educate our members as well as the larger Catholic population on the various issues related to this important issue. We shall work with regions to gather comments and local experiences about this issue and then develop an action plan for years 2 and 3 which we hope will include participation at all levels of the Society. We should use our personal contact with those in need to assist us in developing this action plan. This is an issue which is relevant at national, provincial and municipal levels and one that requires support from every region and conference in order to achieve success. There will further information in the coming months about the campaign.

The Seeds of Hope program is one that started several years ago in Ontario and which is now a national program. While there are several parts of the program, the major emphasis is helping families that we serve, to start a RESP saving plan which then generates free money from the federal government for post-secondary education. There is information about this program on the national website. We encourage conferences across Canada to consider joining this program and use it to give real hope to families that their children will have a brighter future.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was built on the foundation of charity and justice. These two issues should be inseparable and be part of our Vincentian charism at every level. I invite you to join us as we continue to expand our social justice efforts.

Jim Paddon, Chair