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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

NATIONAL PRESIDENT ELECTION

A brief reminder to all of you who are thinking of submitting their application for the position of National Council President, there is still time to do so. Go to this link www.ssvp.ca/national-president-election, and you will find the procedure to follow as well as all necessary documents to submit your application. The deadline to send the documents is March 31, 2018.

I can assure you that even though volunteer work is demanding, it is highly rewarding and gratifying. You will never be alone in your task, since God, the staff, the executive committee and board members, and over 15,000 volunteers are available to bring you all the help you will need.

I recommend that you keep in mind the fact that this is teamwork, and that by sharing dossiers with the various committees, you will ensure that the work is divided among everyone rather than carried out by only a few individuals.

If you feel this call, take the time to think about it and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in the process. If you have any question, please feel free to contact me at: president@ssvp.ca. Good luck to all of you.

VISIT TO PEOPLE LIVING ALONE

I know that I talked to you before about the unfortunate reality that is loneliness, but let me mention it again, since an increasing number of studies show that loneliness is becoming the number one scourge in our modern society. Whether at home or in special homes, more and more people live alone and have no one to talk to, sometimes for days on end. Loneliness affects their mental and physical health and very often, after a while, those people have no quality of life left. Home visits have been the trademark of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul since its creation. It is what differentiates

the Society from all other organizations dedicated to helping people in need, because when we visit people, we take the time to listen to them. For me, that is why it should be natural for us to add this good deed to our to-do list. We do not need to acquire new skills to visit isolated people, since we already make home visits. I invite all conferences across the country to discuss during their next meeting how they could include these visits in their list of activities and to appoint a team responsible for making an inventory of places to visit and find volunteers to make the visits. That way, your conference will participate in helping people who experience a type of poverty that is very real nowadays; that is, loneliness.

AGA 2018

This year, our Annual General Assembly will take place in St. John's, Newfoundland, on June 20-24. I invite all of you to participate. In addition to meeting Vincentians from all over the country, you may register for excellent training workshops, as well as presentations on very interesting projects. You will also have the opportunity to experience wonderful moments of faith with your Vincentian sisters and brothers. Several members also take advantage of the AGA to add a few vacation days to their stay, before or after the meeting, and visit the area, thus combining business and pleasure. In conclusion, whether you decide to enjoy a vacation or to come directly to the AGA, I hope that you will allow yourself this downtime at the beginning of the summer.

For more information about the AGA and registration, please visit: www.ssvp.ca/2018-aga

Hoping to meet you there,

*Jean-Noël Cormier, President
National Council*

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SPIRITUALITY

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE LAITY

In my role as Spiritual Advisor for BC/Yukon, I'm finding it difficult to connect with Spiritual Advisors of Conferences and Particular Councils. My sense from planning and leading our Regional Conference last spring is that we have few priests acting as Spiritual Advisors and that conferences get by with members sharing a spiritual reflection. This is a far cry from the Rule in 2.2.8 where, from the beginning of the Society, the President has appointed a person to foster the spiritual life of conference members.

The critical shortage of priests in many parts of the Church is calling us to prepare lay conference members who have the appropriate spiritual training. Our National Spirituality Committee is preparing a programme for training Spiritual Advisors.

Never before in the history of the Church has the absolutely essential role of the layperson been as dramatically emphasized as it is now. For over 50 years, since the completion of the second Vatican Council, the teaching of the Church is that laypeople have a distinct and very real role in the spreading of the Gospel.

The Church's teaching on the laity is one of the most unknown pieces of good news in the world. By "laity", the Church means the following: The Laity are "all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World."

The laity make up 98% of the membership of the Body of Christ!

Pope Francis, in a 2013 document, describes the laity he wants in the Church to become "**MISSIONARY DISCIPLES IN COMMUNION**". These four words define the lay vocation, converted followers of Jesus, who, together with others, share Jesus' life and faithfully seek to spread their joy, life and love to those who have not yet come into that twofold communion.

It is a community of believers trained and inspired to go out and transform politics, society, education, neighbourhoods, family and marriages.

It is a brotherhood of Good Samaritans drawing near to neighbours with love and mercy. It is the faithful who are the salt of the earth and not just salty critics of the Church.

It is a body of torchbearers radiating Christ's light rather than hiding it within the bushel basket of self-reverential, spiritually worldly and ultimately "sick" parochial or diocesan structures.

This should become the new vision for lay Spiritual Advisors in the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

*Joe Rigby, Spiritual Advisor
BC/Yukon Regional Council*

IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep regret that we announce the following deaths:

Hélène Beaupré

Ste-Maria-Goretti Conference, Montréal QC, September 8, 2017

Lucienne Fournier

Repentigny Conference, QC, November 13, 2017

Claude Tremblay

St-Jean-Baptiste Conference, Montréal QC, November 17, 2017

Harry White

St. Anthony of Padua Conference, Vancouver BC, January 2, 2018

Colombe Chénier

Jésus-Marie-Joseph Conference, Orléans ON, February 3, 2018

John Nordholt

St. Michael Conference, Cobourg ON, January 15, 2018

Réal Lalancette

St-Jean-Vianney Conference, Montréal QC, February 25, 2018

TWINNING

THE VALUE OF TWINNING

In writing about the subject of twinning a Canadian conference with a conference in another country, it is not my intention to undervalue the great work that we in Saint Vincent de Paul deliver to persons in need within Canada. It is, however, a fact that we reside in a country blessed with an abundance of resources and the wherewithal to capitalize on those resources, be they natural, human or financial. It is also a fact that many countries do not have our advantages and also suffer from poor governance and a lack of freedom of the press, judiciary and other institutions. Within this environment exist Saint Vincent de Paul conferences carrying out charitable works as we do here in Canada. Nationally, Saint Vincent de Paul has set up the capacity for Canadians to assist conferences in greater need throughout the underdeveloped and developing worlds. The objective of this paper is to highlight both the importance and the opportunity twinning will provide to your conference.

An opportunity arose in 2007 for the Holy Cross conference in Victoria to twin with a conference in Cajicá, Colombia. They had started a day-care centre for children of impoverished families. The demand is huge due to the displacement of Colombian families as a result of the 55-year civil war and also the drug wars that have ravaged that country. Also, abortions have been reduced through the efforts of civil society, resulting in more births to singles moms and Colombia is now receiving 60,000 Venezuelans (mostly poor) per month as refugees. Seventy-five per cent of the parents are single and their children would not be prepared for entry into elementary school without the existence of the centre. Apart from basic training, the children receive breakfast, lunch and a snack, music, dance and theatre. Half of them receive toilet training, as they enter the centre at the age of 2 1/2 years. They spend three years at the centre before moving on to school.

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Two of our conference members have visited and evaluated the success of the centre and have been most impressed with how well our twin conference plans and coordinates activities at the centre. We continually communicate with our twin conference through Skype, e-mail and telephone and we do have the advantage of having Spanish speakers in our conference. In addition, the pastors of the parish in Cajicá can easily locate parishioners who can be asked to volunteer to provide translations and/or live interpretations. We also communicate with our benefactors and our own conference as to what is transpiring with our twin conference. The experience of twinning has been most rewarding to us and we would highly recommend it to each and every conference throughout this country. Although we contribute the maximum of \$3,000 per year, this only represents about 4 1/2 per cent of the operational costs of the centre, and benefactors have contributed more money that we send directly. We only do this due to the size of the centre (96 children) and the fact that their operational costs are \$61,000 Cdn. per year.

We would recommend that conferences that undertake twinning do the following:

1. Provide continuous communication and prayers for your twin.
2. Don't worry about language - this can easily be solved with a little bit of initiative. Google translate isn't perfect but the general meanings will be understood if a translator isn't available.
3. The twin will know their own needs and also how they carry out the work within their own culture. **Only offer advice if requested by the twin conference.**
4. Consider a visit to your conference if possible. One can always link it to a vacation trip to the country.
5. As there is a three thousand dollar limit, a donating conference should consider a Twinning Project (\$3000.+) if the initiative really demands additional funding.

*Don Rose, Twinning Rep
Holy Cross Conference, Victoria BC*

BC WILD FIRE RELIEF PROPOSAL

The writer was commissioned by Scotty MacLaren, BC/Yukon Regional Council President to head up a committee to provide assistance to those in BC most affected by the 2017 forest fires. A committee of three was established, including the writer and the presidents of the two conferences located in the region most affected – Theresa Lidster of Kamloops and Lynn Paterson of Williams Lake.

The region of British Columbia that suffered most from the 2017 forest fires is the Cariboo. This is an area of central BC which stretches from north of Cache Creek to north of Quesnel. The most fire affected area in the region is west of Highway 97. Many communities in the area were evacuated, including the entire community of Williams Lake. Many of those evacuated from the outlying rural areas were First Nations people.

When we began to look at who was most in need of relief from the effect of the fires, we soon realized that it was many of these First Nations communities. Parish priests in the area were approached and Father Lawrence Travis in Williams Lake put us in touch with communities west of that city.

When we met with the administration of some of those communities, we found out that the issues were based around their custom of living off the land. What they lacked was hay for their cattle and horses as the fields were scorched, firewood to heat their homes as the forest was destroyed, and meat to replace that not obtained due to the lost hunting season and by the scattering of wildlife ahead of the fires. After some discussion, it was established that, for the most part, they were able to obtain their hay and firewood from other sources, but meat remained an issue.

We considered the possibility that assistance might be available from other sources, including the Canadian Red Cross, Regional Emergency Operations Centre, Emergency Management BC and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. Of these, only the Red Cross is still active in the area of fire relief and we were advised that no further assistance was anticipated.

We contacted the First Nations Health Authority and established that there were additional communities west of Quesnel in need of assistance similar to those visited with Father Lawrence. The final count of the homes in all communities in need was established as follows:

Williams Lake area

Stone	54 homes
Anaham	120 homes
Toosey	44 homes
Sugar Cane	106 homes
Soda Creek	63 homes

Quesnel area

Nazko	30 homes
Kluskuva	8 homes
Alexandria	12 homes

The total number of homes in need is 437.

We have researched pricing of ground beef from local sources and established a budget price of \$4.00 per pound. This price will be confirmed by a competitive process. We estimate that providing 30 pounds of beef to each home would cost \$52,440 plus transportation and distribution costs. Transportation and distribution are estimated at \$3,000.

To address the issue of liability, it is proposed that the Society's responsibility ends with payment for the meat at a reputable source. It is intended that the meat will then be taken for delivery from the supplier by the First Nations management and transported and distributed to the homes in need in each community.

We have contacted the Chiefs of each of the eight bands and have obtained their approval for this program to be implemented.

The funds available for this program are as follows:

BC fire relief fund	\$15,500
National fire relief fund	<u>\$40,000</u>
Total	\$55,000

We are proceeding to obtain firm pricing for, and to arrange for the supply of ground beef from suppliers in both Williams Lake and Quesnel. We are also working to arrange a schedule of times when the meat will be available for each band to pick up. We are anticipating that the First Nations Health Authority for each band will be able to oversee the fair distribution of the meat.

Respectfully submitted,

*Les Atwell, 2nd Vice President
BC/Yukon Regional Council*

INVINCIBLE HOUSING, SSVF OF OKANAGAN VALLEY, BC

Life is good here in the Okanagan Valley. This is the widely-held belief.

But never mind the beautiful ski areas and recreational outlets, golf courses and boating experiences. The Okanagan is not so attractive if you can't be "living the dream". With the vacancy rate close to zero for any reasonable living quarters, with seasonal, minimum wage, part-time jobs and no benefits offered in most service, tourism sector and construction helper jobs, with income assistance rates (albeit improved) far below what one pays to have even shared accommodations and something to eat – fact is – times get tough. Of course, saying all this in a Saint Vincent de Paul magazine is preaching to the choir.

What grew out of all these dismal observations, though, is what offers hope. We in Kelowna did not see ourselves acquiring a building – or many buildings, as required to stem the housing crisis tide. However, three or four years ago, a "Little Engine that Could" came down the line as the brainchild of two Kelowna Vincentians (now in Calgary) from the St. Pius X Conference. We started small, just five people. Looking for a positive Vincentian word, we called ourselves "**Invincible Housing**".

We aimed to keep our antennae up for people falling through the cracks. Where health or safety required, we would devise a plan to lift them out of the chronic state of decline into depression and homelessness. We would offer a rental subsidy to their landlords on an up-to-2-year basis until our friends could get on solid footing to make ends meet. We would forge relationships with property managers to trust us to help our clients to be dependable renters. We would help clients make applications to subsidized housing (a faint hope in Kelowna, considering the three-to-five-year waiting lists). We would find partners and look at other initiatives that keep people from sliding into homelessness. We would start small, as we feared we could quickly go broke.

It took a long time, at first, to figure out who to help and why them, exactly. So, we didn't go broke. We had two households we helped for many months in 2016-17, both single gentlemen. It had taken us a year to collect data, visit nearby cities for models, look at funding sources, and confer with BC Housing personnel. It took another year to draw up forms and policies,

interview clients, become familiar with other agencies with similar goals, determine where we could fit in usefully, to become bold enough to say out loud what we were attempting to do, and finally – to offer a set amount of funding, to a specific person or family, for a determined period of time so they could stay in the market housing where they had landed.

As our housing crisis deepens, as there are fewer and fewer options for those living in poverty, as there are more and more deaths of people in poor circumstances, the whole city, at least the social sector, has ramped up the sense of urgency to respond. The next big piece of track to put down for our very little Invincible Housing engine is to examine requests to our five Kelowna conferences for rental assistance on a one-time basis, while keeping up with the more complicated longer-term needs. We had developed an expertise among our members and formed connections to social and rental agencies to give us confidence to

take this on.

In October, conferences urged us, "Yeah – go for it!", and funding became a little more dependable because of generous, even personal, donations and a pop-up garage sale outlet behind St. Charles Garnier Church in south Kelowna. It has been quite a ride since then! Early January, at the beautiful and near miraculous phenomenon of PICC (Partners in Community Collaboration), which includes representatives of those who work with the most vulnerable people in town, SSVF got a shout out from participating agencies, thanking us for our Christmas parties, extra gift cards and toys for children and, especially, for stepping up to help keep people housed when hope was very dim. We have developed an impressive roster of partners: from the Canadian Mental Health Association to property managers and building owners, from Now Canada to the Ki-low-na Friendship Society, from the United Church to our own religious congregations. Who knows where this train will take us? It's all good, because it is a necessary journey and because we are going up a very long hill with these brothers and sisters. We just have to keep up the chant: "We think we can! We think we can!"

*Peggy Salaberry, Invincible Housing Committee
Okanagan Valley Particular Council, BC
1-250-718-1575*

A COMPELLING FEATURE OF "INVINCIBLE HOUSING" IS THAT WE BELIEVE THIS MODEL TO BE REPRODUCIBLE IN OTHER COMMUNITIES.

OZANAM HOUSE, KELOWNA, BC

Ozanam House, a project of the Okanagan Valley Particular Council, opened its doors on April 1, 2007 to serve adult men who suffered from alcohol and/or drug abuse. Purchase and modifications to an existing 2-storey, 7,000 square foot 4-plex facility were funded by the BC Housing Corporation as part of the federal government's Homelessness Initiative. Ozanam House is a full-service 18-bed recovery home, licensed under the BC Adult Care Regulations, with 24/7 staffing and offering residents a comfortable private room, healthy meals, medication management and professional recovery programming. Funding is available that allows residents to pursue special interests that may help in their recovery and to re-training when they are ready to return to work. The men initially enter with a 6-month program but can extend their stay to up to 2 years if required for their recovery. Ozanam House typically serves 50 men per year.

The Ozanam House recovery program is a combination of biopsychosocial, twelve-step and faith-based programming. The biopsychosocial approach itself is comprised of biological, psychological and sociological aspects: the biological aspect looks at the physical body and issues like withdrawal and cravings; the psychological aspect looks at the brain and cognitive distortions that often lead to self-defeating behaviors; and the sociological aspect looks at societal and family issues that are typically at the source of many traumas.

Following the daily group workshops, there is a weekly recovery check-in to assess how each man has progressed and to prepare for the week ahead. These workshops start off assessing where the group is at in terms of recovery insight. From there we look at past traumas and how to take responsibility for them in a way that is empowering. We then carry on looking at coping skills, other than drugs or alcohol, that may also have become debilitating.

Recognizing the complex nature of addictions, which are often compounded by other mental health issues, the men are encouraged to connect with a counselor at Kelowna Mental Health. We also suggest participating in a peer support group. For the physical body, recreation passes are available for a couple of city facilities and there are weekly in-house meditation, yoga and spirituality groups, plus pro bono acupuncture and chiropractic services. After three months of programming, trauma counseling is available.

Addiction appears to be a spiritual malady of sorts, inasmuch as it strikes to the core of the human being and to the society in which he lives. In addition to having a well-rounded treatment, there appears to be the need for true human connection, to be a part of the healing process. This is the strongest aspect of Ozanam Recovery House and the staff who operate the house: bringing the whole self to this work, in empathy, compassion, understanding, caring and love.

*Les Atwell, Past President
Okanagan Valley Particular Council, BC*

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SOUTHERN B.C. WILDFIRES

Southern B.C. wildfires caused evacuation of over 35,000 people with many of them coming to Kamloops. The Salvation Army set up their food truck at the arena downtown where up to 500 people a night were housed. SSVP was part of the outpouring of caring. We were able to spell off the Salvation Army preparing six meals. Many members and associates spent countless hours walking dogs, doing intake interviews, helping people find other accommodation, and running many errands. Even though the majority of the fires were several hundred kilometres away, the almost daily thick smoke reminded us of the suffering of so many people.

*Theresa Lidster
OLPH Isolated Conference, Kamloops BC*

Youth cooks preparing baggies filled with fresh veggies.

Cooks with Salvation Army members.

CHRISTMAS MEAL

The St. Pius X Conference served a traditional Christmas meal for our clients on the 9th of December 2017. There was live music provided by a teacher and students from the local Catholic schools in Kelowna. Children decorated gingerbread houses donated by Shaw. The children were thrilled by a special visit from Santa delivering gift bags. Families were given gifts for their children, donated by St. Pius X parishioners.

Our conference members helped prepare and serve the meal and also provide Christmas hampers for the families served this year. These hampers were in the form of gift cards for Superstore. In total the conference provided hampers for 72 households containing 145 people.

*Mike Wilson, President
St. Pius X Conference, Kelowna BC*

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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.

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