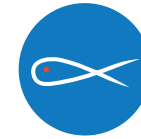


Social
Justice
Edition

Vincenpaul
CANADA



The newsletter of the
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul
National Council of Canada
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Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing is a Human Right



NATIONAL HOUSING CAMPAIGN

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CLICKABLE!

WE ARE
CALLED



2020 ANF
ANNUAL NATIONAL
FORMATION
Calgary, Alberta
June 25 to 27, 2020

CHAIR REPORT - NATIONAL SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

NATIONAL HOUSING CAMPAIGN UPDATES/NEWS

Our campaign committee is now working on the final revisions to the Action campaign under the theme of “Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing is a Human Right”. The draft of this action plan was distributed to each regional president for their input and comments. In addition, we invited one or two selected focus groups from the conference level from each region to also provide their comments. The final draft will be presented to the national board of directors in April 2020 for their approval. There will be a presentation of the campaign at the 2020 Annual National Formation (formerly AGA) in June 2020 in Calgary.

The key measurement of the campaign’s success will be reliant upon the level of participation by our councils and conferences across Canada. Our best opportunity for success will be at the local municipal level where our membership is often familiar with their local government and related agencies and organizations. I would encourage every council and conference to consider how they might get involved. This could mean simply providing relevant resource information to their membership, but it could include collaboration with local initiatives or developing a local housing related project. Our grassroots conference membership can also conduct local advocacy on various issues that affect their community.

The campaign committee shall gather, produce and distribute various relevant information either by email or by placing it on our website or Facebook. We can be more effective in this area if our membership communicates what kind of resources they need as the campaign proceeds. The Action plan itself is an extensive document which will also be accessible on the website once approved by the national board of directors. The plan will serve as a guide and source of material for use at the council and conference levels.

CARE FOR CREATION

We anticipate future efforts to provide information to our membership regarding environmental and climate change topics. We believe that by using the term Care for Creation, we can demonstrate the relationship of nature to our Creator. Pope Francis provides a very informative background in Laudato Si as he emphasizes the relationship between climate change and how it affects the most vulnerable. As Pope Francis mentions, the changing climate does have a very negative effect on those living in poverty who are usually poorly equipped to handle extreme weather such as storms, flooding and higher water levels. In our advocacy efforts to raise the importance of caring for all of creation, we should always consider the effect that the failure to act can have on the most vulnerable.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF CANADA

There are three different segments when we discuss Indigenous Peoples of Canada which includes the Inuit, First Nations and the Metis Nation. We are working on ways the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul can develop resources that enable our membership to better understand indigenous history, culture and faith traditions. There are many misconceptions and myths about indigenous topics and there should be a strong emphasis placed on gathering and distributing information that educates our membership and the general population while dispelling inaccurate information. There are several ways every Vincentian can act, on which we shall provide future information, but the essential and most positive action is the personal contact we may have in our various Vincentian works of charity and justice. If your community has an Indigenous Friendship Centre, why not visit them to see if there are any events open to the public which you could attend. If you are near a First Nations community, perhaps invite a member to attend your conference meeting to discuss Indigenous history, culture and faith traditions. Attend a pow wow and enjoy the entertainment, food and friendship.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ACTION

The social justice network is the most successful method of making a real difference in addressing the root causes of poverty in Canada and globally. A strong, educated and active network of Vincentians committed to social action at all levels of the Society can achieve some remarkable results. If every council and conference has one or more members to act as their social justice reps or contacts, it will enable us to educate our entire membership on the many issues that we need to address. Please add social justice to every meeting agenda. Please talk about the issues and discuss how you may act. Please join us during our national housing campaign. Please pray for our friends and neighbours in need.

*Jim Paddon, Chair
National Social Justice Committee*

SPIRITUALITY

Safe, secure and affordable housing is a human right. This is the issue that the SSVP National Social Justice Committee is inviting us to address. On the occasion of the 3rd World Day of the Poor on November 17th, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops [they also call themselves a conference] raised the subject of housing by issuing a statement entitled, **Poverty in Canada: Ensuring Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing. How like-minded!**

What is so vital about housing that it suddenly receives so much attention?

In his hierarchy of needs, represented as a pyramid, Abraham Maslow has determined that physiological needs, sleep being among them, are the very basis of those needs. Immediately above come the needs related to safety, requiring an environment that is stable and predictable, without anxiety or crisis. Housing, one's own home, meets that specific need and minimally addresses the primary need for rest.

In order to live, human beings need a supportive environment and a protective shelter. The Bible corroborates this view. Ben Sirach, the wise (Sir), in his proverbs, writes in Sir 29:21, **"The necessities of life are water, bread, and clothing, and a house that ensures privacy."** Human beings aspire to have a place to call **"home"**, a nest, as stated in Proverbs (Prov 27:8). Furthermore, a house is so precious that the man who has **"built a new house but not dedicated it (...) should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another dedicate it."** (Deut 20:5, 1 Mc 3:56)

Did Jesus have a home? He did not start well: there was no room for his pregnant mother at the travellers' inn. It was only temporary: the wise men, **"(...) going into the house, saw the child with Mary his mother."** (Mt 2:11) Note that Jesus spent 90% of his life with his parents. (Lk 2:51) His baptism was the start of many displacements that prompted him to say, **"(...) the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."** (Lk 9:58) Far from seeking to build a home (that could become a place of worship), Jesus wished to **"(...) be in my Father's house"** (Lk 2:49), where he would prepare a place for his disciples. (Jn 14:2-6)

Does this mean that Jesus ended his life as a homeless person? Matthew 4:13 reports that Jesus, after his stay in the desert, came to live in Capernaum. Mark 2:1 says that people, knowing that **"(...) he was at home,"** gathered there to listen to him and bring the sick to him. Mt 13:1 recalls that one day, **"(...) Jesus went out of the house (...)"** to teach on the lakeshore, in parables. Then, **"(...) he came to the house"** (Mt 13:36) and explained a few parables to the disciples. If we exclude his usual pilgrimages to Jerusalem, when we look at the locations he visited, we see that they form a circle around Capernaum. He was probably staying with one or another of his apostles' families. Perhaps Simon Peter? (Mk 1:29)

As for the importance Jesus gave to housing, let us quote Mt 25:35c, **"(...) I was a stranger and you welcomed me";** in other words, I was homeless and you provided shelter. That's another aspect of poverty to put on our radar screen.

*Alain Besner, National Spirituality Committee
Quebec Regional Council*



THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

Our conference has been preparing monthly hampers for about 40 years. Three years ago, a Social Justice rep came forward and we began to expand our mandate and to broaden our horizons. We were encouraged to listen more carefully to our clients during home visits. We were also encouraged to expand our list of community contacts. As a result, over time, we have become increasingly more effective in meeting the needs of those we serve.

Recently, while preparing for our monthly meeting I was inspired to present the story of our newest hamper clients; a young married immigrant couple expecting their first child in the near future. They were experiencing significant challenges.

Here is the story I prepared:

THE STORY OF VINCENTE AND SOFIA

Vincente and Sofia are our latest hamper recipients. Vincente, a wine technician from Chile, came to Canada with a two-year working visa. He is a quality-control worker on a blueberry/ cranberry farm in Maple Ridge, British Columbia. He was such a good worker that the company renewed his contract for another two years. Sofia is a woman from Guatemala. She lived in a small village where a Mayan dialect is still spoken. She speaks Spanish as a second language and knows only a few words of English.

Sofia had been working for two years as a seasonal farm worker on the same farm as Vincente. They met in 2017 and married in October 2018. She is in Canada with a visitor's visa. Vincente and Sofia are applying for permanent residence. Their application is in the process of being accepted.

Sofia, especially, is facing considerable challenges. As a non-resident, she doesn't qualify for services that regular immigrants receive. She has no medical coverage. She is unable to access English as a Second Language classes. Living on a remote farm with no public transit available to her, she is isolated. She has few people here in her new country to communicate with in Spanish. They are not in her age group. Sofia is expecting a baby in December 2019. The medical costs this couple is facing are considerable: \$75 for every visit to the family doctor, \$200 for ultrasounds, \$50 each for basic lab tests, and a normal hospital delivery of \$6,000. Should a C-section be needed, the cost would be \$9,000 plus medical fees. Taking these costs into consideration, Vincente and Sofia decided to have a midwife home delivery at a cost of \$3,000. Understandably, this couple is under a considerable amount of stress – finances being only one of many. What can we do as a conference to help?

Since sharing Vincente and Sofia's story with my conference and a few other conferences, the following has happened:

- There is now \$2,170 in an account available to Vincente and Sofia towards medical expenses.
- Sofia is visited regularly by Eliana, one of our conference members. Eliana provides emotional support plus interpreting and translation help.
- We connected Sofia with resources available in the community. At the library, she attended informal gatherings with other immigrant women to gain exposure to English. Through the Diabetic Society, she attended a Healthy Eating program. Sofia attended sewing classes. The instructor, material for sewing, and a donation of a sewing machine came from the Senior Centre. Sofia made some baby items.
- Sofia has joined a young mother's drop-in at St. Pat's, our neighbouring parish; the most valuable outcome being the connection with women her own age. They welcome her and have taken her under their wings. The young mothers organized a baby shower for Sofia and invited our conference members to join with them. Ten of us attended. Vincente was also present and thanked everyone, saying that they felt they were amongst friends and family. One of the young mothers speaks Spanish and she advocates for Sofia. She has also become a special friend, at times inviting the couple for Sunday dinner.
- Sofia cooks meals for farm workers for pocket money. Her hope is to start a business in the future. Our conference helps by providing her with food items to use in the meal preparation whenever possible.

Sofia gave birth to a healthy baby boy on Christmas Day. It was necessary for her to have a hospital birth.

Our Saint Vincent de Paul Conference has given Sofia and Vincente aid in the form of hampers and financial support. Most importantly, we are helping to empower Sofia to integrate into her new country. In return, we have gained an understanding of the challenges immigrants and refugees face when coming to a new country for a better life. By telling the story of Vincente and Sofia, our members connected emotionally with this young couple. Furthermore, we put into practice principles of the Social Teachings of the Church.

Often, Saint Vincent de Paul members willingly give help to others without knowing the stories of the people who receive it. Storytelling is a powerful tool for gaining empathy for those we serve. It promotes discussion and problem-solving amongst all members. Storytelling empowers us to serve our friends in need with love, respect, justice and joy.

*Johanna Cross, National Social Justice Committee
BC and Yukon Regional Council*

ADVOCACY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN MONCTON

Members of the New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice, Moncton Chapter, including Sister Auréa Cormier, secretary of the Mother Teresa Conference, have been advocating for better conditions for people living in poverty. One of the key conditions is certainly affordable housing.

According to the recent Moncton's Community Implementation Plan for Affordable Housing, home prices in Moncton are not affordable for households earning less than \$41,750. Moncton's rental rates are not affordable for households earning less than \$30,320. Presently, the full range of housing needs is not met by the private housing sector for individuals and families with low income, for those on social assistance and for seniors. Canadian Rental Index data indicates that people with revenues less than \$25,906 are paying more than 50% of their income on rent and utilities in Moncton.

Indeed, given the limited income of many Monctonians, the need for modest housing is huge. Here, a single minimum wage worker's net revenue is only \$20,610. That of a couple with two children and one parent working is \$28,646. The situation is worse for a single social assistance recipient whose net revenue is only \$7,122. A couple with two children depending on social assistance gets \$26,412 including the Canada child benefit. For these individuals and families, housing is out of reach.

In Moncton, citizens on low income often need to rely on soup kitchens and food banks to eat because, otherwise, they would go hungry. Since they have no means of transportation, they need to find affordable housing in Moncton's downtown core because of the central location of free food-related services as well as health care facilities, social services, public transportation, food banks, etc.

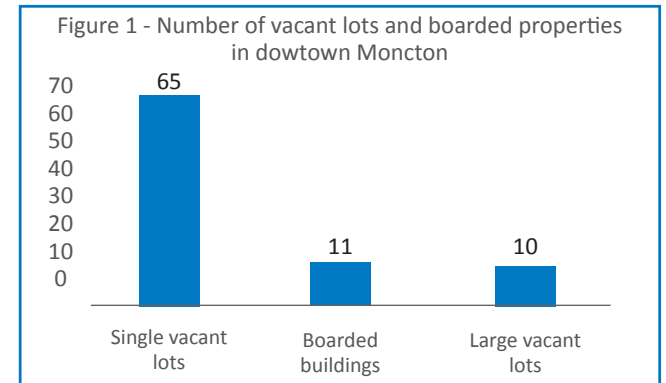
The Common Front members had noted that in the downtown core of Moncton, there were numerous vacant lots that could be used to construct low-cost housing, the type affordable to people on low income. In the last number of years, they observed that more and more of these empty lots, created by tearing down old houses or burned-out rooming houses, are reclaimed by private developers who capitalize on these available lands to build high-class apartments or condos which are way above the means of low-income people.

Given the importance of increasing the amount of affordable housing in Moncton's downtown core, six members of the Moncton Chapter of the Common Front for Social Justice, surveyed the number of vacant lots and boarded up houses along the streets in the centre of the city. They were astonished to find so many empty lots and boarded buildings just in the city core.

Figure 1 presents the results of the survey carried out by CFSJ members.

With the results of their survey in hand, two members presented the information to the Moncton City Council during one of their regular meetings. They concluded their presentation with the following recommendations:

1. That the Moncton Community Implementation Plan for Affordable Housing be applied. The plan states that the City should develop an inventory of surplus City-owned land and buildings which may be disposed of and are appropriate for the development of affordable housing, and share this information with residential developers and other housing partners.
2. That the City of Moncton create a Community Land Trust Foundation that would:
 - Work with Co-op and Non-Profit Organizations
 - Buy or expropriate some of the key vacant lots
 - Lease municipality lands for 99 years
 - Seek to accommodate a diverse range of tenants.



For the Common Front members, one of the keys to reducing poverty is certainly the availability and affordability of housing. They are very concerned by the number of empty lots in the downtown core and also by the trend of turning these vacant lots into high-end apartments or condos. They are suggesting that large cities like Moncton do more to bring affordable housing to their downtown core and, in this way, help reduce poverty.

The survey was conducted by the following Chapter members: Jean-Claude Basque, Auréa Cormier, Robert MacKay, Omer Mazerolle, Marilyn Riel and Val Smith.

*Auréa Cormier, National Social Justice Committee
Atlantic Regional Council*

TEEN SUICIDE

“Suicide is the act of intentionally causing one’s own death. Mental disorders are risk factors and these include depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, personality disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance abuse, including alcoholism and the use of benzodiazepines. Suicides are impulsive acts due to stress, such as from financial difficulties, troubles with relationships, or bullying. Those who have previously attempted suicide are at a higher risk for future attempts. Effective suicide prevention efforts include limiting access to methods of suicide: such as firearms, drugs, and poisons; treating mental disorders and substance misuse; proper media reporting of suicide; and improving economic conditions. Even though crisis hotlines are common, there is little evidence of their effectiveness.”

We are concerned about the growing problem of suicide. About 3,600 people die by suicide in Canada each year — about 10 suicides per day. We say “growing” problem because suicide rates have increased by 60 per cent worldwide, in the last 45 years. For every suicide death, there are an estimated 20 to 25 attempts.

The average rate of death by suicide in more populated countries is approximately 26% of 100,000 people who die. In Europe, about 20% of 100,000 people die by suicide. The lowest suicide rates are in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Surprisingly, the most troubled nations in the world have comparatively low suicide rates. Canada is 43rd on the list of countries with a 12.5% suicide rate. Lithuania is the first with 31.9%. The lowest countries are Antigua and Barbados at .5% out of 195 countries.

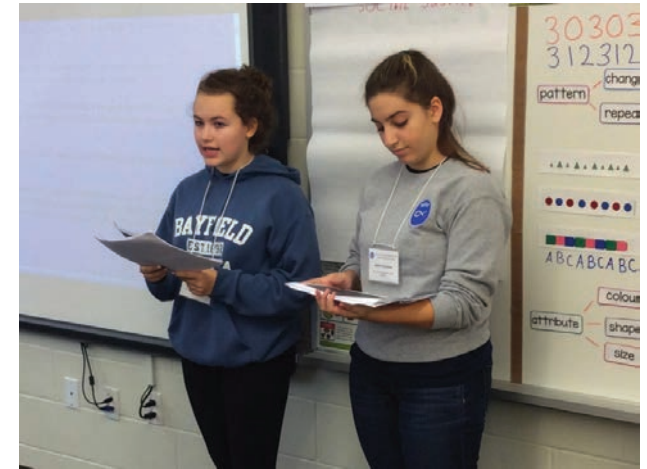
Suicide is disturbingly common among children and youth. It is the leading cause in Canada of non-accidental death among those aged 10 to 24. In 2007, it accounted for 20.2% of all deaths in this age group. On average, nearly 10 young lives are recorded as lost through suicide every week across the country. One in 10 Ontario students in grades 7 through 12 reported seriously considering suicide and about 3% reported attempting suicide.

The best thing we can do to support people with suicidal tendencies is to be aware of the signs and to listen to those who might come to us for help. People thinking of suicide find ways to invite help from others. This support can be as simple as asking, “Are you OK?” followed by reporting what you hear to someone who can help.

Signs of suicide include:

- Lack of interest in activities they usually enjoyed
- Trouble getting out of bed in the morning
- Problems sleeping
- Problems eating
- Withdrawal from friend and family activities
- Pretending to be sick to get out of different activities

It is crucial to maintain a strong relationship with your child, so you can know if any of these signs are visible. Make sure to ask about what is going on in their lives; look for signs of drug use; check for the signs of suicide listed above; and talk to them about how feeling this way is nothing to be ashamed of and actually very common in youth. As many as one in five children and youth in Ontario will experience some form of mental health problem.



Adria and Kennedy during their presentation at the Ontario Regional Council meeting.

We have many supports for people and families who have been affected by suicide. However, we believe people are afraid to speak up due to the stigma associated with mental health. For this reason, we feel it would be beneficial if we educated people to be more knowledgeable about suicide.

Supports include; Crisis Services Canada, M.I. Understanding, Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, London Health Sciences Centre, and WAYS Mental Health Support.

We hope that this gives you an idea of how to effectively help others who are struggling; after all, it is our duty to help those who need our support. “As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the grace of God in various forms.”

*Adria Gioiosa, and Kennedy Knoch
Ste. Louise de Marillac Youth Conference
London, Ontario*

CALL FOR WORKSHOPS - ANF - JUNE 25-27, 2020

WORKSHOPS ARE HELD ON THURSDAY JUNE 25, 2019

The theme presented at this ANF is:

“WE ARE CALLED”

The theme has been chosen so that we as Vincentians may take time to reflect on how we interact with those we serve. Workshops may be developed around the theme.

NATIONAL COMMITTEES SPONSORED WORKSHOPS – TOPICS VARY FROM YEAR TO YEAR:

1. Roles of the President and Executive - conferences/councils;
2. Succession planning - conferences/councils;
3. Policies and procedures;
4. Recruitment and orientation;
5. Train the trainers.

OTHER POTENTIAL WORKSHOP TOPICS:

1. Structural causes of poverty;
2. Collaboration with other organizations;
3. Spirituality of the work of a Vincentian;
4. Foundations of our Society;
5. Special works – the public face of our Society;
6. SSVp in North of 60;
7. Advocacy and how to advocate effectively;
8. Systemic change projects;
9. Youth in action;
10. Fundraising.

Workshops are typically 75 minutes long. Presenters must provide their own presentation materials and equipment, i.e. portable disk drives and their own pcs for connection to existing in-house-supplied AV equipment. Any handout materials are the responsibility of the presenters to produce, bring and supply to attendees.

Final date for submission of workshop forms is April 1, 2020. You may mail your forms in, or email them to exdir-digen@ssvp.ca.

Richard Pommainville, Executive Director
2463 Innes Road, Ottawa ON K1B 3K3

[CLICK HERE FOR ONLINE FORM](#)



Title of workshop: _____

Language presented: English ____ French ____

Description of the workshop: _____

Presenter name: _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Email: _____

Short bio - presenter: _____

How does the title/topic tie into the AGA theme?

Required room size/type: _____

Required AV materials: _____

Handout materials are the responsibility of the presenter.

Please send by April 1, 2020 to:

Richard Pommainville, Executive Director
2463 Innes Road, Ottawa ON K1B 3K3
exdir-digen@ssvp.ca

Approved by the National Training Committee

Date: _____



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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