

SOCIAL JUSTICE NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2024



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An educated and passionate advocacy voice can reach many ears and minds

As another year nears its end, let's remember all that we as members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul have accomplished in our efforts to address the root cause of poverty across Ontario and Canada. When we look at current food prices, rising housing and rental expenses and the many other factors that tend to keep our neighbours in need trapped in the cycle of poverty, let us also commit to looking at how we can do more.

Advocacy should become a major component of our social justice efforts in 2025. We have a strong collective voice at all levels of government. We are always open to collaboration with other like-minded organizations to accomplish our goals. We have many members with various degrees of expertise in areas that can be used to accomplish these goals.

Why are we not more involved in social justice and particularly Advocacy?

There are many reasons to not actively support social justice. However, let's look at the reasons why we should become more active. These are very simple. When we engage with our neighbours in need during our home visits, or meeting them at our parish, community meals, food banks and thrift stores we will often hear of the barriers and challenges faced every day which hinder their hope to have and enjoy a better life. While our works of charity help in the short term, we can also see the need to make systemic changes in the social structures and levels of assistance. These can include welfare and disability rates as well as the lack of affordable and liveable housing. It is about providing everyone with a sense of dignity and self-respect.

As a grass roots province wide organization we can make a real difference by advocating for such change. Please consider joining our advocacy and social justice efforts in 2025.

Homeless encampments are an issue in many of our communities as local governments struggle what to do with those living in make shift tents and structures. Recently a number of mayors appealed to Premier Ford to enact laws giving more power to cities which could include jail time for homeless people. We do not agree with this action as it fails to respect the human dignity of those affected. Please join us and other organizations as we protest these proposed actions. Please read the article Call to Advocacy in this newsletter by Bruce Crampton, SSVP Grimsby. Please consider joining us by letting your MPP and local city council know how we feel about the action proposed by these mayors.





The Ozanam Education fund was one of the first systemic change projects we started several years ago. It is designed to assist those unable to afford a higher education by financial grants towards their educational expenses. I have seen the hope and security the Ozanam fund can provide to applicants who may never have had the opportunity to have the same dignity and hopeful future that we experience. The Ozanam Fund is in need of your financial support if they are to continue their efforts. If your council/conference is able to help with funding please consider helping with your generous and kind pass up to the Ozanam Education Fund.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a non-profit registered charity that has been serving our neighbours in need in Canada since 1846. In Ontario, each year over 5000 of our volunteers visit more than 170,000 people offering assistance such as friendship, food, furniture, and vouchers. We work with other organizations providing shelters, affordable housing, and homes for people with developmental disabilities, mental illness or addiction issues. As well as our works of charity we work with those in need to bring fundamental change (Systemic Change) by helping them get access to resources that will help them break the cycle of poverty. One of our most effective projects for helping to break the cycle of poverty is our Ozanam Education Fund. This Fund provides resources that enable people to get an education and escape the cycle of poverty. After a few brief years of operation this program has had a high impact by responding to over 380 requests providing resources to very needy people that otherwise could not afford to get an education.

The need to help continues to grow and we are now reaching out to institutions, corporations and individuals to help us meet this need. Our target this year is to raise \$200,000. so that we can respond to the immediate need. The program is administered by volunteers and has no overhead costs with the donated funds going directly for resources to help those in dire need to get an education.

Donations can be directed to Society of Saint Vincent de Paul – Ontario Regional Council PO Box 23016 Brantford PO Main, ON N3T 6K4 . Cheques should be made out to Society of St. Vincent de Paul - ONRC add "Ozanam Education Fund" in the memo line. You can also donate through CanadaHelps website Donate Now - SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, ONTARIO REGIONAL COUNCIL

Your financial support large or small will make a difference in someone's life. Please be generous.



The Indigenous Sharing Circle believes education about reconciliation is very important to all members and our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

Please consider including an Indigenous Land Acknowledgment (ILA) at your meetings.

Please find attached an explanation of what the ILA is and why it is an important starting point in our understanding reconciliation.

You can also help by asking your pastor to include an ILA before each mass. As I invite our member councils and conferences to consider supporting our reconciliation efforts,

As I invite our member councils and conferences to consider supporting our reconciliation efforts, I'd like to address the issue of using an Indigenous land acknowledgement at our meetings.

There is a lack of education or misinformation that may create unwarranted opposition. I'd like to first look at what a land acknowledgement is NOT.

- It is not about recognizing the legitimacy of land claims.
- It is not about choosing to recognize one tribal claim at the expense of another.
- It is not about territorial claims.
- It is not meant to create division among our membership.
- It does not have to take precedence over opening prayers.

What is a Land Acknowledgement?

A land acknowledgement is a Recognition of the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. It should never be done as a form of tokenism but rather because of our understanding of the significance that such action must both our Indigenous sisters and brothers, and our membership.

Why do we recognize the land?

To recognize the land is an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose ancestral territory you reside on, and a way of honouring the Indigenous People who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. It is also part of Indigenous protocol to honour the land of those you are visiting or working and living on. It is important to understand the long history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. By incorporating a land acknowledgement in our Society, we are contributing to the process of honouring and embracing the spirit of a place. The importance of living with nature is one that Indigenous People have understood for many years but is one we are now appreciating as part of the changing environmental concerns we all have. Land acknowledgement is also about Respect for the historical and ancestral relationship that Indigenous People have had and continue to have with the land, climate, and creatures. The example of the respect Indigenous People have for the land is very relevant in today's world of climate and environmental concerns. We could learn much about the indigenous concept of nature and human beings being connected. Indeed, this concept is the basis of systemic change, which is the overarching term our social justice efforts come under. We are connected to one another as well as to nature and to God. Indigenous beliefs are about being good stewards of the land, not owners.

Moving beyond land acknowledgement is about Reconciliation.

Land acknowledgement should be a starting point by the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in our efforts to gain a deeper and richer understanding of Indigenous history, culture, faith traditions and laws. The negative effect systemic racism has on Black, Indigenous and people of colour is well documented in poverty statistics. How and why Indigenous People are affected by systemic racism should be part of our journey of understanding and reconciliation. Any land acknowledgement without a sincere effort to take further actions is of little use. Our obligation to address injustices in today's world that directly contribute to and sustains poverty for many cannot be ignore.

Please display your support for reconciliation at your next meeting by including an Indigenous Land Acknowledgement.



The Homeless Hub is an excellent source of resource material on poverty related issues. They also offer free online courses on various topics which can benefit our understanding of these issues. They are currently offering a course titled Decolonization, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. You may find the link to this course in this email. It presents some excellent information about this topic while addressing both Indigenous and other diversity related issues. Please consider taking this course.



Christmas 2024

As chair of the PPDD and a long time SSVP member, I'd like to thank each and every member across Ontario for your dedication to charity and justice.

Please take time this Christmas season to enjoy your family and friends while also saying a prayer for our neighbours in need and your fellow Vincentians.

May God bless everyone!