

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Canada
A National Strategic Plan
2015 to 2020



The science of charity reform is not transmitted through books and at assemblies as much as by climbing stairs in the home of the poor, kneeling at his bed, suffering from the same cold as he does, and discovering the secret of a grief-stricken heart in the course of a friendly conversation. When we have accomplished this ministry, not for months, but over long years; when we have thus studied the poor at home, at school, at the hospital, not only in our city but in several, and also in the country, in whatever condition God placed him, then we can start to know the formidable problem of misery, then we are entitled to propose serious measures.

Blessed Frederic Ozanam, 1848

Strategic Planning Committee:

Peter Ouellette – Committee Chair

Bill Yule – B.C. Yukon Region

Tony L'Heureux – Western Region

Jim Paddon – Ontario Region

Pierre Morissette – Québec Région

Jim McIntyre/ Cecile Snow - Atlantic Region

Jean-Noel Cormier – National President

Jason Hunt – Youth Representative, National Council

Letter from the National President

Nowadays, the needs of people asking for help are changing. When a new assistance request comes in, the stereotypes that we use to deal with in the past years are less and less present. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul must adapt to that new reality if we want to continue doing what we are here for, that is to help people in need with Love, Justice, Respect and Joy.

Since the foundation of the first Conference in Québec, in 1846, the Society rapidly expanded. Today, 169 years later, we are present from coast to coast, as well as in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. We have new Conferences and we have consolidated others.

Our 850 Conferences and Councils offer a multitude of services, often very different from one region to the next. However, such assistance is always offered in all respect for individuals, because we take the time to listen to what people have to tell us. So, taking the time to listen to what you have to say seemed very natural to us.

In order to better understand your new reality, we held focus group sessions and we inserted a questionnaire in the Vincenpaul magazine and on our website. Many of you responded and your replies allowed us to identify four sectors of activity where we can improve our methods. Moreover, the comments you made during the survey helped us develop action plans to help achieve those improvements. Therefore, with all the information gathered, we were able to develop our new strategic plan.

The four sectors of activity that you have identified are:

- Vincentian spirituality
- Vincentian work
- Promotion of our activities
- Development of the Society and its members

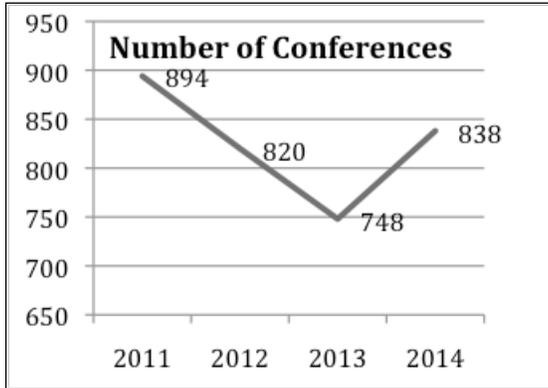
You will find in the following pages the complete description of our strategic plan. That plan will guide us in our actions during the next five years.

We are so grateful for the support of Pope Francis who is constant with the reminder that we need to extend our faith into the community and to specifically help those in need. You will see references throughout this report to The Joy of the Gospel: *Evangelii Gaudium* – Nov 26, 2013. I hope you enjoy these readings.

Our gratitude goes to the members of the strategic planning committee for a work well done, to those who contributed at the focus group sessions, and to everyone who took the time to reply to the questionnaire. You allowed us to produce a document that truly reflects Vincentian's preoccupations and vision across our country.

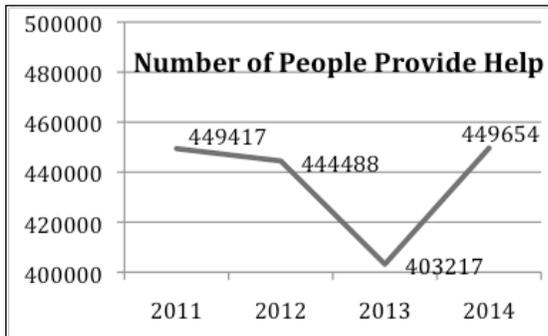
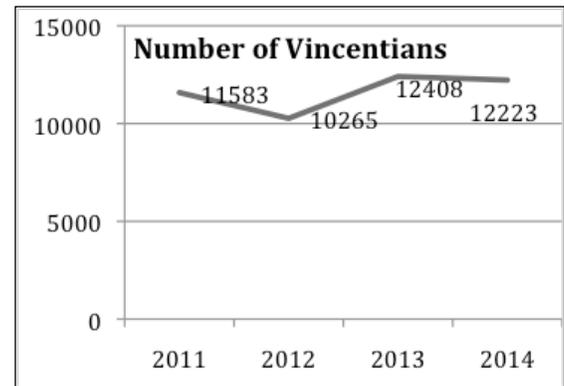
Jean-Noël Cormier
National Council President

Your Society Today



Over the last four years The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has seen many changes as we shift to assisting those in need in some of the less populated areas of Canada as well as initiating programs related to Systemic Change. We recognize the need to adjust to the needs of our members. The number of Conferences is changing because of growth in new areas of Canada and because of consolidation in other regions. The chart shows both aggregated and non aggregated Conferences over the last four years.

Our Vincentian membership continues to grow slowly. It has the potential to grow significantly. The Vincentian Works that are conducted by our Conferences and Councils is significant. The opportunity that we have to offer Catholics the opportunity to put their faith into action is a compliment to the New Evangelism that our Church is encouraging. Should we not share our great Vincentian experience and passion with others.



Look at the good Works of the Society and what we do. The number of people living in poverty that have been assisted by your Society is significant. Almost a half a million in Canada have been touched by the passion of Vincentians but needs to continue to grow. Our help will continue to be defined and redefined to assure that your Society continues to help people in need with Love, Justice, Respect and Joy.

Let's look at some of the recent changes that the National Council has initiated. Note that this is a National Strategic Planning document. Many other works have been introduced by Particular, Central and Regional Councils across the Canada.

Below is from a recent status report delivered by our National President.

Education Committee: Basic training modules were updated and posted on our website. We still believe that group training with a trained instructor is preferable, but when that is not possible, you can always go to www.ssvp.ca and access the training modules.

Social Justice Committee: We think that by regrouping the Voice of the Poor, Systemic Change and Prison Ministry committees, we will become more efficient and consistent. In reality, even though those three committees can easily work separately, we think the three of them working together will allow a better understanding of national issues that need to be addressed.

Moreover, that committee works jointly with representatives from the North American Vincentian Family that includes the following religious congregations and organizations:

Congregation of the Mission; Daughters of Charity; Sisters of Charity; Society of Saint Vincent de Paul; Vincentian Marian Youth; Vincentian Lay Missionaries; Miraculous Medal Association; Vincentian Mission Corps; Religieux de Saint-Vincent de Paul (only in French countries)

One of the main objectives pursued by that group of committed Catholics is to fight injustice by raising awareness.

Strategic Planning Committee: That Committee was very active in the last year, and during the coming months, you will hear more and more about strategic planning. The reason is that your opinion is essential to the development of a strategic plan. The strategic plan that will guide our actions for the coming years can only be built upon everyone's ideas.

Youth Committee: Our National Council Youth Representative, Jason Hunt, worked very hard this year to recruiting young members from all Canadian regions to put together a National Youth Committee. That Committee will help us develop programs intended to aid us to recruit more young people and better serve that specific age group. As of March 31, 2014, we have 224 youth under 18 year and 347 18-35.

Twinning Committee: There was a lot of work done to increase the number of twinned conferences, and the results are very encouraging: twinned with 19 countries, 89 active external twins, and \$81,903 sent by Canadian partner as of March 31, 2014.

Finance Committee: This past year, the objective of the Committee was to rejuvenate our methods, by using available technological tools to reduce delays required to complete transactions, but particularly to help us access real-time data on our financial situation.

In addition to that, thanks to the generosity of a supporter, the Finance Committee was able to renegotiate our mortgage on the national house, at a much more favourable rate.

National and International Emergency Committee: It is a Committee that we would prefer not to need, but given the reality of things and the force of recent natural disasters, that Committee has been increasingly active.

Spirituality Committee: That Committee has the heavy task to ensure that we never forget who we are and what we have chosen to do. We are Catholic lay people who have chosen to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ by serving needy people with love, respect, justice and joy.

Because we have selected to work with an organization based on the Christian faith, it is essential that sisters and brothers in Jesus Christ guide us, to help us remain in touch with that reality. My opinion is that the members of that committee do an excellent job in this respect.

At the end of April, they organized a day of retreat for the Board members. It was a great way to help us establish a very clear link between the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our mission to help needy people.

Expansion: There is a team from the Western Region who, under the leadership of Peter Ouellette, work very hard at bringing help to Northern Canadian communities. The project, known as North of 60, is for now limited to the Western Region, but I believe that all regions should participate in the effort, and help those Canadian people who live in a state of poverty that is unacceptable in a country as rich as ours. Children regularly remain as long as 48 hours without food. How can we not react when we are aware of that situation?

That is why the Board has accepted that this initiative becomes a national project, and that all regions participate in the effort and help for those people who are abandoned by everyone. In the coming months, various initiatives will be undertaken to collect and send supplies to the North before winter makes operations more difficult. I invite you to participate in those initiatives, thus ensuring that as many people as possible receive the help they need.

Communication: All of us agree that in order to serve more people, we must increase the number of Vincentians, as well as our revenues. One of the things we can do to achieve those objectives is to increase our visibility so that more people find out who we are and what we do. We have started doing just that and for now, we limit our interventions in those parishes where we are the most active, where we recruit and where we have existing benefactors.

So, to start with, we make sure that we do everything we can to reach as many people as possible in those communities. Once that is accomplished, we will look into disseminating information in parishes where the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is not established. Finally, we will determine how to increase our visibility among the public in general, by using the media and other means of communication.

The Strategic Planning Process:

In Oct 2013, your National Board established a Committee for the development of a five year strategic plan for our Canadian Vincentian Family.



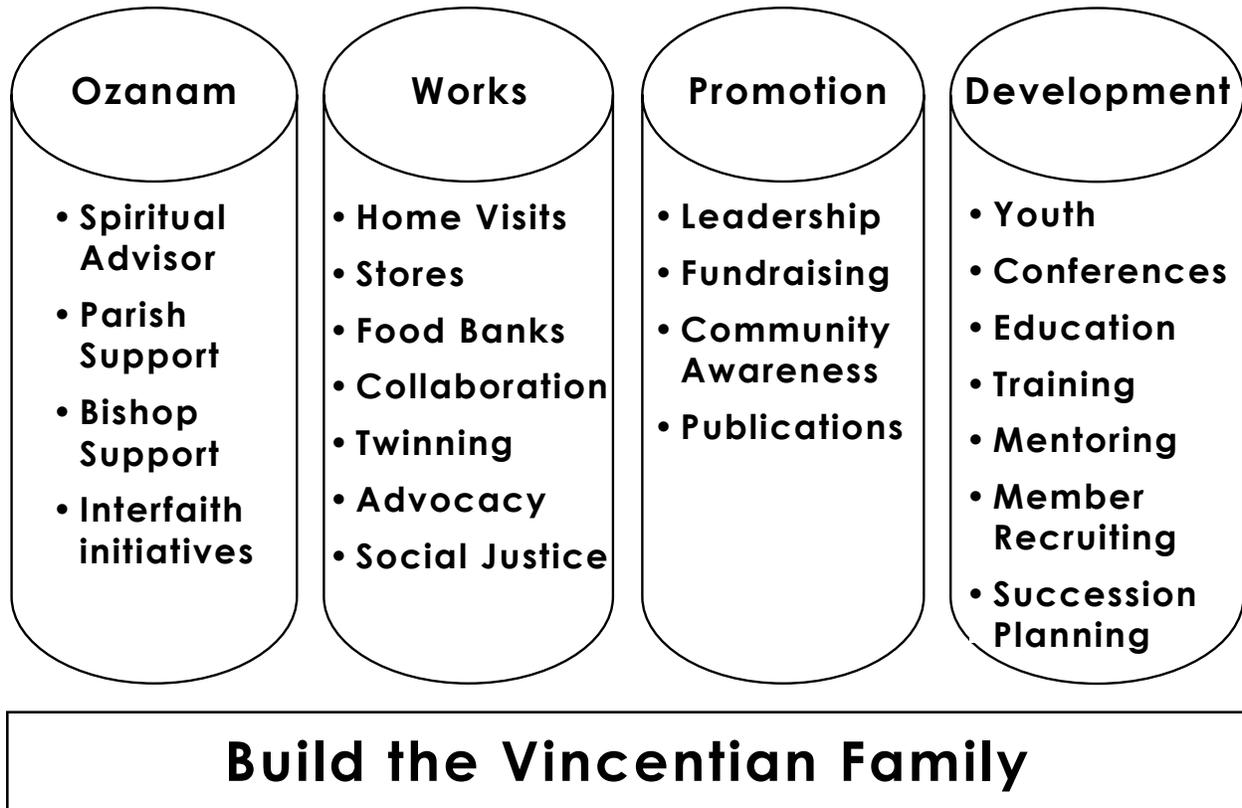
A committee was formed with representation from all five SSVP Regions. Additionally the National President and the National Representative for Youth were added to the committee.

Monthly telephone conference calls were held. Committee members presented focus that was most relevant to those members in their region. Research on similar

SSVP studies was completed as well as brainstorming sessions involving the regional representatives.

SWOT Analysis was conducted. An understanding of our Strengths and Weaknesses of our Society and the Opportunities and Threats that we face was found to be a strong starting point for looking at strategic options. This provided a focus for further discussions on “how can we” strengthen our Society and “what is stopping us” from moving forward. A time line started to unfold. The process developed into four areas needing support. These are shown as the four columns supporting our Vincentian Family.

Your Society in Canada



This work was presented to your Society at the National Annual General Assembly in Edmonton on June 14, 2014. Those in attendance supported the actions presented. Members volunteered to continue this work into their regions with focused discussions of Vincentians in smaller groups. These focus sessions were held across the country and where Regions had recently completed similar work, the summary of their focus sessions were also included in the total of the thoughts collected. These are presented in the Appendix 1 of this report for your review.

Additionally, in Sept of 2014 a survey was developed and provided to Regional Presidents for their discussions and review with Council and Conference Presidents. To maximize the input from all Vincentian members, this survey was presented to the membership through:

- the National Society websites: www.ssvp.ca, and
- RSS Feed – Breaking News (sign up at www.ssvp.ca “Subscribe to our RSS feed”)

Input that was collected from the survey is collated and presented in Appendix 2 of this report.

Is His Holiness Pope Francis a Vincentian? Compare the following and note other statements in this report that are taken primarily from *Evangelii Gaudium*:



“We live in the most unequal part of the world, which has grown the most yet reduced misery the least. The unjust distribution of goods persists, creating a situation of social sin that cries out to Heaven and limits the possibilities of a fuller life for so many of our brothers.” Pope Francis

“The question which divides men in our time is no longer a question of political systems. It is a social question: that is of knowing which will prevail: the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice? Whether society is to be simply a great opportunity of exploitation for the benefit of the strongest or a dedication of everyone for the benefit of all and especially for the protection of the weak.” Bl Frederic Ozanam 1836

Pillar #1: Ozanam

Spirituality is the basis upon which the Vincentian actions are distinguished from that offered by the secular groups of social service agencies. As Pope Francis says, *“An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be.”*

This is the Vincentian way. It is what our membership wants. We must first of all strive to present this Spirituality to all Vincentians in Councils and Conferences across the county. We have the support of our Pope who says *“The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change.”*

1.1 Spiritual Advisors are a necessary part of our Conferences and Councils. The presence of the Spiritual Advisor strengthens the bond between the spiritual and apostolic activities of the Conferences and Councils and those of the Church.

ACTION 1.1 Presidents of all Conferences and Councils will appoint, develop and have available a Spiritual Advisor for monthly meetings and for general counsel (guidance, advise, direction, recommendation, etc) to their Vincentian family members.

1.2 SSVP Conferences need the support of their Parish Priests, Parish Councils and wider Parish community. *“One of the more serious temptations which stifle boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, “sourpusses”. Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in...”*

ACTION 1.2 Presidents of Conferences must take the time to meet with the Parish Priests and Parish Councils to advise them of the good works of the Society in the Community. Parish bulletins should be used regularly for communicating to the parishioners, informing them of what is being done with the donations entrusted to them for the service of the poor. If Conferences Presidents find resistance in getting this done they should seek the advice of others in their Vincentian family, Vincentian benefactors or their Particular Council, to intercede on behalf of the Conference.

1.3 SSVP support from the Diocesan Bishop is an important part of the communication process. It is often through the larger oversight of a diocesan view that Community “Works” that fall into the SSVP vision can be achieved. Annual or semi-annual updates should be presented by the Councils to the Bishop in the Diocese outlining the number of home visits, the number of members in the Vincentian family, the status of “Works” that are being presented by the Vincentians and the difficulties that members are having in the community.

ACTION 1.3 Council Presidents should schedule annual meetings with their Diocesan Bishops.

1.4 Interfaith groups are all around us. They often have values that are similar to that of our Society. As Vincentians, we see Christ in anyone who suffers; come together as a family; have personal contact with the poor; and help in all possible ways. We can work together. We need not duplicate services but we encourage collaboration in activity.

ACTION 1.4 Council and Conference Presidents should research Faith based and secular social assistance activities in their community that may compliment the work of the Society and initiate discussions with these groups in an effort to collaborate and thereby improve the overall service to those in need.

Pillar #2: Vincentian Works

As we read in our Rule, the responsibilities of Vincentians in the Conference are varied. The most important one is to bring comfort and aid to the poor. The fundamental activity is the person-to-person encounter with the poor through home visits, carried out by pairs of Vincentians. Home visitation demands the highest respect for the dignity of the poor. Our Works are as varied as the Conferences that make up our Society and the particular needs in these Conferences as well as other faith and non-faith groups in these neighbourhoods that are functioning with similar objectives.

“Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross is nothing else than the culmination of the way he lived his entire life. Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world. But we do so not from a sense of obligation, not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives.”

Stores and food banks provide for those in need, They also provide a recognized brand name of our Society functioning as Catholics in Action helping those in need in our communities. Less well understood in our communities is your Vincentian effort in assisting those in need internationally as well as in Northern Canadian missions. Your disaster relief efforts have also been noteworthy and indicate opportunities for growth in understanding and helping those that are victims of circumstantial poverty.

2.1 The home visit is the foundation and “charism” that most differentiates Vincentians from secular social service providers. A person-to-person visit in the home allows Vincentians to see firsthand the difficulties experienced by the disadvantaged and to better assess their primary needs for food, clothing, shelter, medical services, etc and to provide emotional comfort.

“This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.”

ACTION 2.1 Presidents of all Conferences should access the National training programs that are available on Home Visits and provide this training to their Vincentian members to assure that our members are capable of conducting both home visits and needs analysis for all those friends in need of Vincentians help.

2.2 Systemic change is part of the new Vincentian movement. What is the root cause of the poverty that you, a Vincentian have been called to address? Is it some element of the total system involving family, institutions, jobs, housing, food and drink, health care, education, moral values, spiritual development, or any one of many aspects of the system that is broken? Vincentians have demonstrated that they can create change through such programs as micro-financing, Vinnie’s Wallet, job placement, counselling, advocacy, etc.

Jesus’ command to his disciples: *“You yourselves give them something to eat!” (Mk 6:37): it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter.”*

ACTION 2.2 Conference and Council Presidents shall develop an understanding of the systemic changes required to engender change for the disadvantages within their jurisdictions. The National Council will support their efforts by developing training programs, best practices brochures and ensuring that lines of communication are created or interconnected to allow an opportunity for all Vincentians to participate. Systemic Change shall be a primary focus for all Conferences and Councils.

2.3 Advocacy, Social Justice has been recently restructured within our Canadian SSVP Society in the formation of a National Social Justice Committee with a mandate that includes advocacy, systemic change and prison ministry. Subsidiarity is one of the core principles of this committee. This principle holds that human affairs are best handled at the lowest possible level, closest to the affected persons.

ACTION 2.3 Conference and Council Presidents shall remain fully informed of the activities and resources of the National Social Justice Committee and of the lines of communication, which allow the exchange of information throughout the Society thereby permitting all Vincentians the opportunity to be informed or to participate in local, regional or national systemic changes efforts.

Pillar #3: Promotion

Where do I find a Vincentian? What are the works that they do? You are Catholics in Action. So how do we share with others the good Works of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul?

Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:35).

By shouting from the roof tops that Vincentians are here to help are we not encouraging others to join us, to support us, and to look to the Vincentian Works as an opportunity for all Catholics to practice charity?

3.1 Leadership was recorded in the Vincentian surveys and in the Focus Groups as being strong but often noted was the need to train our Conference and Council Presidents on motivational and leadership skills. Functional training for Conference President, Secretary and Treasurer are also currently available. Much of this training includes promotion because if we as Vincentians spread the good word of the Works that we do, then others will follow. We will have both new recruits as well as the ability to retain our current members and also have more of these members stepping up to the plate for Conference and Council administrative roles that need to be filled.

ACTION 3.1 Regional Presidents will assure that all Councils and Conferences are aware of the existing training programs that are available at the Canadian National website. The National Education Committee will research and develop ways to make training more accessible to every member of the Society. Presidents will establish through Regional Communications, Regional Websites and Meetings, a forum for sharing best practice methods that have proven success.

3.2 Fundraising, Community Awareness and Publication, these are not traditionally the function of the humble and quiet Vincentian going about their Works in shadow of secrecy. *"..people feel an overbearing need to guard their personal freedom, as though the task of evangelization was a dangerous poison rather than a joyful response to God's love which summons us to mission and makes us fulfilled and productive."*

Do we not want others to help us? Are our Works not something that so many would contribute to, if only they had a better understanding of "What is a Vincentian?"

ACTION 3.2 Councils and Conferences will develop and act on strategies that will make others in their community aware of the contribution of our Society and the ability of the Vincentian to help those living in poverty.

- 3.3 Communications and the methods of reaching out to others are changing in this world of new technologies. As a result, a “disconnect” between our aging members and the youth, who are our target new member group is created. We must learn how to embrace the new technologies so that we can communicate with those who are available and who want to help us serve those in need.

ACTION 3.3 Council and Conference Presidents will identify the gap that exists in their communication practices and work with the support of their Regional Executive to expand their communications methods through Parish and Diocesan news media, social media and other new forms of communications.

Pillar #4: Development

As we talk to members of our Vincentian family, we are provided good insight into the problems that they face individually as well as in Conferences and Councils. These problems often relate to lack of resources, skills, money and manpower - Vincentian fatigue as well as recruiting issues. Why, when we all recognize the good work that we do - why do others not want to follow?

“The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. As a result, work becomes more tiring than necessary, even leading at times to illness. Far from a content and happy tiredness, this is a tense, burdensome, dissatisfying and, in the end, unbearable fatigue. This pastoral acedia (a state of listlessness, of not caring or not being concerned with one’s position or condition in the world) can be caused by a number of things. Some fall into it because they throw themselves into unrealistic projects and are not satisfied simply to do what they reasonably can. Others, because they lack the patience to allow processes to mature; they want everything to fall from heaven. Others, because they are attached to a few projects or vain dreams of success. Others, because they have lost real contact with people and so depersonalize their work that they are more concerned with the road map than with the journey itself. Others fall into acedia because they are unable to wait; they want to dominate the rhythm of life. Today’s obsession with immediate results makes it hard for pastoral workers to tolerate anything that smacks of disagreement, possible failure, criticism, the cross.”

- 4.1 Youth development, while primarily the responsibility of Conferences, it is clear from the Rule that the Regional Council shall support them in this mission, and in the organization and coordination of youth groups within the region. We must tailor our Conference activities to be more embracing of young people, allowing them to take leadership roles and bring ideas to our existing activities, while nurturing their creative spirit to find new ways of serving the poor.

“The rise and growth of associations and movements mostly made up of young people can be seen as the work of the Holy Spirit, who blazes new trails to meet their expectations and their search for a deep spirituality and a more real sense of belonging.”

ACTION 4.1 Conference Presidents must develop strategies to involve youth and young adults in all of the Conference activities.

- 4.2 Some of our Conferences need to be revitalized. To enjoy a day of training with fellow Vincentians has proven to be an effective way of recharging our batteries and brainstorming new and exciting ways to expand our services to those in need. Education and training is currently available on the Society’s National website. Training has been done using both telephone and internet methods. There is often discussion on the effectiveness of class room training as opposed to the alternative home based training. The key factor is what will work and what is available to present to our Vincentians that are asking for more.

ACTION 4.2 Conference and Council Presidents will survey their members and develop a priority list of training subjects that are in need. This list will be presented to the next higher level President for a review of what content is available and what delivery methods can be used to present the training to their Vincentians.

Appendix 1: Focus Group Highlights

Sessions were held between Sept. and Dec. in Victoria and Okanogan BC, Edmonton and Calgary AB, Toronto (2 sessions), Quebec (data from earlier Strategic Planning Sessions), St John NL. In total inputs from eight group sessions is included in short summary below. This is condensed from over 30 pages.

The comments represent the current thinking of Vincentians from across the country. The highlights of actions required are as follows:

1. Encourage a stronger interaction between members of the councils and conferences.
2. Have more Vincentians participate in the financing, development and the promotion of Vincentian works.
3. Promote continuing education and the development of all members.
4. Project a contemporary image without denying the Christian values.
5. Renew the image of SSVP and increase its visibility in the community and its involvement with the business community.
6. Join Conferences together to strengthen those that are weak.
7. Clarify the roles of Conference and Council executives.
8. Make the forms and reports that are passed on by our members common in format across the country.
9. Have Central Councils develop a clear strategy and promote this to Particular Councils and Conferences
10. Renew the image of the Society and increase its visibility in the community and its penetration with the business community.
11. Develop a sense of listening, modesty, solidarity and fraternal friendship.
12. Recognize the effort of volunteers who invest time and energy for the movement.
13. Maintain a healthy collaboration and generously share between different levels of our Society.
14. Remain vigilant by favouring an autonomous management of the Conference.
15. Guide the formation of the new members.
16. Intensify our representations for the poor with governmental and religious bodies.
17. Encourage family volunteering.
18. Showcase our work.
19. Advertise our mission, our objectives and our activities.
20. Organize press conferences.
21. Develop a good synergy between the Boards, Conferences and Member.
22. Develop a concrete regional activities book.

23. Reduce the cost of purchase food by consolidating the purchase volume of several Conferences.
24. National Council should recognize the apathy in membership and focus on a plan.
25. National should introduce a training program to train leaders at every level to actively overcome stagnation.
26. Sharing of best practice should be the focus of all Particular Councils so that Conferences can learn how to better serve.
27. Should look for corporate sponsors to assist us in getting our message out to the general public on the services we provide to those less fortunate.
28. Purchasing t-shirts with our logo at the conference level to wear to different functions we are involved in. Partnering with other organizations would be another example.
29. Define what the issues are and address these in an in-service program for all conferences for continuing members.
30. Introduce into the covenant agreement for screening that all members must undertake to adhere to policies and procedures or any other document introduced by the conference executive to ensure accountability and responsibility. This covenant agreement would have to be amended by National Council.
31. Set up a booth in universities looking for younger people.
32. Conduct meetings and information sessions by using conference calls, Skype and other advanced technology as conferences should be kept in the loop!
33. Promote interest in getting members to attend National AGA who have never attended and have a seasoned member go with them to introduce them to the experience of a National conference.
34. The first day of our National conference should be set aside for Regional meetings.
35. Regional meetings are very important but the costs of travelling to them are high and the money could be put to better use. Again, technology should be used to enhance member interest and participation.
36. Further develop clarity of vision and mission as they apply to our times and society.
37. Develop a way to share work load among different members so that not a few members taking on too much responsibility as a means of retaining effective members.
38. Need to develop the focus and specific strategy in attracting youth members.
39. SSVP is a grass root type organization in the sense that this is not initiated and directed by the Church hierarchy. Its own spirituality or the spiritual motivation of its members has to be emphasized as a focus and priority of the Society.
40. The Society needs to develop a strategy to win the active overall support of the local parishes and the bigger Church hierarchy for its services.
41. Develop mechanism and process to communicate and train members on SSVP rules and policies even though they are published in the Rule Book. This may take the practice of setting aside an allotted time in each meeting to discuss certain sections of the Rule Book.

42. Develop an effective strategic and process to communicate among conferences and from National to conferences particularly in matters of core beliefs and commitments. Perhaps the web site can be enhanced as a mechanism if updated more frequently and made more interesting.
43. As a Society, we need to be more networked with other organizations providing similar or compatible services such as the government. We need to have a way of effectively networking with them to become more efficient in delivering our services.
44. As a Society, we need to put emphasis on addressing the structural causes of poverty of the clients we serve, and at the same time put the emphasis on our services in helping our clients to help themselves rather than having a dependence on us for their well being.
45. Have evening and weekend meetings to accommodate the aging membership.
46. Invite non practicing and non Catholics to join the Society.
47. Set up a specific time to evaluate and debrief members after home visits.
48. Reach out for new members by profiling those that may be most suitable for the jobs that are available.
49. Recruiting by have information nights talking about the Good Works of the Society – use Social Media.
50. Open more Thrift Stores to increase funding for the Conferences.
51. Collaborate with other Faith Groups to learn from them.
52. Have National develop a school curriculum that can be used in classrooms across the country
53. Succession planning and shorter terms of Conference and Council Executives should be established.
54. Central Councils do not understand the needs of the Conferences They need to listen.
55. The Society is a well kept secret. We need to be more visible in our communities.
56. Best practices should be developed and shared across the country.
57. Establish a stronger partnership with CWL and K of C.
58. The Society has a great story to tell, Use this to apply for Government Grants.
59. Establish a routine of two training days per year per Council and audit the attendance of Conference membership for feedback to their Presidents.
60. Engage all volunteers to the limit of their availability and capacity. They want to participate.
61. Support, develop and utilize websites for all member awareness and training.
62. Find new members that will offer multilingual capability in all languages needed to communicate with those that we serve.
63. Identify the skill set of our Vincentian family members and encourage the members to do what they have capability to do.
64. Ask Parishioners for help and then ask again.

65. Bring a Voice to the poor – tell their stories.
66. We need money to help those being evicted.
67. We do not get support from our pastor who favours other church groups.
68. Conference, Particular Council, Central Council communication breaks down. We do not know what's going on.
69. The Rule is critical to what we do but it appears to be very bureaucratic/an operations manual.
70. The Rule does not reflect the characteristics of diverse geographical roles, traditions, philosophy, etc.; it lacks flow and is difficult to get through/overwhelming.
71. The Rule should be user friendly and contain more variety of literature and flow/should be split up into sections that contain its history, important figures, voices from the poor with narratives, Vincentian input, operations, etc.
72. Our friends are refusing to access community networks after being given all the necessary contact information.
73. Those in need are purchasing cheaper/cost saver/affordable processed foods instead of preparing home-made means using wholesome more expensive ingredients.
74. Politicians at all levels are not mandating that poverty and affordable adequate housing for everyone be put on the radar/agenda.
75. Parishioners not placing themselves in the midst of the poor the way Jesus did and including them as equal community members.
76. Amenities for the poor, such as shelters, food banks, and soup kitchens are mostly concentrated in the downtown area instead of proportionately/appropriately distributed throughout the whole region.
77. The homeless are the most needy and receive the least attention and assistance (shelters send them out during the day).
78. The Archdiocese should fully and equitably work with our Society. The poor should come first.
79. It is everyone's basic human right to belong in a safe place. We are all responsible for that.
80. Every adult should be doing something purposeful for society and receive pay through Social Services if necessary that is adequate to help them make ends meet monetarily and through programs that equip them with basic healthy living skills.
81. Connect people to their families (building healthy loving relationships).
82. Every public and private institution should have the elimination of poverty as one of their core values and built into their mission statement through the education of its members about the marginalized.
83. There is a need for Councils to meet regularly with the Bishops to encourage support of the Society.
84. Councils should consider employing full time volunteer coordinators.

85. The commitment of volunteers and Vincentians depends significantly on providing them meaningful work.
86. Home Visits Training Program could include home-bound individuals, accompanying Eucharistic Ministers in visits to hospitals, etc.
87. Develop new approaches to recruiting volunteers through venues such as: sports organizations, libraries, notice boards at shopping centres, recreational facilities, high schools and universities:
88. Establishment and strengthening of Conferences is critical.
89. Establishment and training of a Contact Person at each conference who will be responsible to distribute information.
90. Recognition of volunteers and members with luncheons and dinners, ceremonies, pins and certificates, and stories on websites, facebook and diocesan media.
91. Communications increase through websites and facebook, articles from Vincentian members.
92. Food banks run by the Society have taken over from Home visits, how do we change this and go back to home visits?
93. Program evaluations for our Society are not being done professionally. There should be a standard of evaluation. If not done properly these evaluations are demoralizing. Areas identified as needing improvement must be addressed.
94. Transparency is lacking within the Society on finances, committee reports and meeting schedules.

Appendix 2: Results of Survey of Vincentians

200 survey responses were returned. In some cases this was a collective response from a Conference and in other cases these were responses from individual Vincentians.

The responses are as shown below:

Question 1 89% yes 11% no

Do Vincentians in your Conference do Home visits?

Of note that many remarked that the poor came to them rather than they going to the poor. Older age of the Vincentian was noted as a problem with doing home visits.

Question 2 94% yes 6% no

Does your Conference have the support of the Parish Priest?

It was often noted that the Parish Priest was too busy to attend meetings.

Question 3 65% yes 35% no

Does your Conference have a spiritual Advisor?

There appears to be an increase number of Conferences training the lay Vincentians to provide spiritual guidance.

Question 4 54% yes 46% no

Do you have an active systemic change project?

The majority of comments suggest that they do not know about systemic change and they request training.

Question 5 73% strong 27% good or poor

How would you rate your Vincentian Leadership at your Conference?

It was noted that training on Leadership and how to motivate others was required as well as more resource materials. Possible these would result in more Vincentians prepared to take on leadership roles.

Question 6 47% yes 53% no

Would you like to have more training?

Biggest demand was for home visitor training and engagement training as well as new member orientation and roles of the executive.

Question 7 97% yes 3% no

Do you tell other Parishioners and neighbours about the good works that you do as a Vincentian?

The Parish Bulletin, public media and word of mouth were most often noted as methods used to tell others.