

CHANGING TIMES - JUNE 2020

Safe, Secure and Affordable Housing Is a Human Right

I begin this month's edition by remembering all those who have passed away during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the many seniors in long-term care homes. Also, may we be thankful for the many healthcare and frontline essential-service workers.

We now appear to be entering a recovery period as we attempt to return to some form of normalcy. With that in mind, let us rejoice in some of the positive ways we have stayed connected with family and friends and in how our communities, governments and fellow citizens have put aside their differences and worked together to overcome the challenges of Covid-19. May God bless us all and keep the issues of poverty and social justice as priority concerns as time goes on.

National Action Campaign Update

The campaign committee held a virtual meeting on May 12 to consider further revisions to the action plan shared with regions and selected councils in January. The revised version of the action plan was re-distributed in late May to all regions and to central councils and particular councils, and these will in turn be encouraged to distribute the action plan to conferences they believe could contribute to the review.

This wider distribution will help us achieve our goal of giving our members the opportunity to join in the campaign.

All comments about the housing campaign and its action plan should be submitted by September 1, 2020 to sj-nac@ssvp.ca or jpsvvp@hotmail.ca. We expect the action plan will be available to all councils and conferences in June, which will allow roughly three months for review and comments. If individual members would like a copy of the action plan, please contact me at jpsvvp@hotmail.ca.

I cannot emphasize enough that, for this housing campaign to succeed, we need the support of not only all presidents at every level, but especially that of our grassroots conferences. With housing being a deeply personal, local-community issue, the support of our conference members will help tremendously, as they likely have a better perspective on what is happening or needs to happen in their community regarding housing and homelessness. In many cases, our members may know a municipal councillor or someone working in the housing and homelessness sector.

As we continue to identify members interested in joining the housing campaign as local champions (be they experienced or not), I would like to describe the champion's role.

The housing campaign champion...

- is either a current social justice rep or an interested conference member
- has working knowledge of the local housing situation (community, provincial, national)

- acts as the liaison between campaign committees at the national and regional levels and among their own councils/conferences
- presents the campaign material to members and the wider parish, including other parish ministries and organizations
- engages with fellow parishioners who may have an interest and/or experience in housing issues, and invite them to participate in the campaign
- engages with community housing contacts and establishes a collaboration on housing issues
- consults our neighbours in need to gather information about the challenges they face regarding housing and homelessness.

This preliminary description simply provides an idea of what the champion may accomplish; it will be fine-tuned as the campaign unfolds.

We've witnessed wonderful examples of individuals, organizations and governments at all levels coming together during the Covid-19 pandemic, including action to remedy poverty and homelessness. For instance, it has been gratifying to see hotels and other vacant buildings opened for those needing safe temporary accommodation.

That said, many homeless people have decided it is safer to simply put up a tent and live outside rather than risk staying in a shelter. So, everything considered, we can learn much from this pandemic not only about the need to care for one another, for the common good, but also about the need to care for creation and the natural environment we are part of.

We do not know what the post-pandemic world will look like, but we can make it a better, safer place for everyone, especially those living in poverty. May God bless us all.

*Jim Paddon, Chair
National Social Justice Committee*