

ST. VINCENT AND GRENADINES ASSOCIATION OF TORONTO INC.

REPORT FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS PRESENTED JULY 30, 2017

The board of directors continues to meet monthly by teleconference. In addition to board meetings there have been several other meetings by members of the board and special committees.

Meetings of the Association

We live in a changing world and need to keep in touch with what is happening in order to survive. In the last few years, fewer persons have been attending meetings which resulted in quite a number of scheduled meetings not having the required quorum so no formal meetings were held. The cost of the venue has been increasing due to changes made by the City of Toronto whereby there are different rental charges for groups according to the residential address of their members. The majority of the SVGAT's members no longer live within the City of Toronto postal codes so we pay a higher rate for the use of Toronto's premises. For many years now we have grown accustomed to having our meetings at the Northwood Community Centre and have used different rooms. The cost for each room is based on capacity so the smaller room you rent will mean a lower rental charge. In view of the above the board has decided that it is in the better interest of the Association to change to these conditions by:

- a) Using a smaller room to reflect the lower attendance at meetings,
- b) Reduce the number of meetings held during the year, and
- c) Change the meeting time to start at 5:30 p.m.

These changes are to become effective from September.

Adopt-a-Child Program

Earlier this year it was reported that funds intended for the Adopt-a-Child program were not remitted for the years of 2014 to 2016. A recent thorough search into our records has found that funds were actually remitted for 2013 and 2014. On behalf of the Board of Directors I offer an apology for the error and to those persons who maintained that funds other than those in 2013 were sent. With this now cleared up it therefore means that the Association was in arrears for 2015 and 2016 in the amount of \$2,400.00 and there is an amount of \$1,200.00 due for 2017. In June the amount of \$1,200.00 was remitted to the students which left amounts for the years 2016 and 2017 to be paid. There was communication between two board members and the principals of both schools and we have received favourable reports about the two students. Both students are from Fairhall and Tourama Government Schools and are due to complete their primary school education at the end of the next school year (2018). The board has agreed to clear the arrears by sending a further \$1,200.00 with intent that this money will be deposited into the banks set up for that purpose for each child and paid to them over a period of time so as to avoid giving a lump sum payment at one time. The final amount will be sent at the beginning of 2018.

In order to assist with clearing up the amount that was due to the children the board made an appeal for special funds and received \$250.00. The board also decided that funds raised through this year's walk-a-thon were to be used to fully fund the balance due to the program. Through the efforts of a number of persons the walk-a-thon was able to raise enough to cover the outstanding amount.

The Scholarship Program

Due to amounts left over from 2016, a contribution of \$500.00 from Arbor Memorial and a renewed commitment of \$1,000.00 from Grace Kennedy Money Services/Western Union the scholarship program has enough funds to offer two bursaries of \$1,000.00 this year. The guidelines and

application forms have been circulated. The closing date for receiving applications is August 31, 2017. A committee consisting of persons who are not members of the board of directors will review the applications and select the two successful applicants. All information regarding the scholarship program can be found on the Association's website, www.vincytoronto.com.

Insight

The Association continues to produce its quarterly newsletter, Insight. Due to the reduced number of advertisers and the increased cost of printing and mailing the board of directors has decided to discontinue the mass mailing of newsletters. The newsletter continues to be sent electronically to all persons on the Association's contact list and it is also found on the Association's website. For some time now, it has become the norm that newsletters are mailed to only members who do not have email addresses.

Working with our Partners

The SVGAT continues to be a fully functioning member of the Council of Caribbean Associations – Canada (CCAC). The CCAC which has been formally launched in 2009 has decided to do a couple of things to help to raise its profile in addition to what has been done in the past. New are an initiative to distribute pens as a fundraiser and to participate in this year's Toronto Caribbean Carnival. (a) For the pens initiative, the CCAC has purchased a number of promotional pens and member organizations are asked to distribute them to members of the community and request a contribution in return and the proceeds will go towards the scholarship programs of both the CCAC and the participating member organizations. The member organization will remit \$1.50 to the CCAC for each pen and keeps the difference for its scholarship program. Since the organization does not have to pay for the pens upfront and since many persons will make a meaningful contribution it is a no risk involvement for the Association and it could derive a healthy return. (b) The Organizing Committee of the Toronto Caribbean Carnival has invited the CCAC to participate in this year's parade as a Guest Band. The CCAC has asked its member organizations to have their own sections by way of T-Shirt sections. Cordel Telfer is the SVGAT's coordinator and has reported that he expects that the final count of participants in the SVGAT's Section will be about 50. The participants are covering the cost of their involvement. The Board of Directors has agreed to sponsor a banner to be used by the SVGAT's Section which would afterwards be used at other SVGAT events.

The CCAC will again present 2 bursaries of \$1,000.00 each to eligible applicants. This means that students from the SVG community have the benefit of 4 bursaries of \$1,000.00 available to them if they qualify as per the respective guidelines. The application form and other related information for those interested in applying can be found on the CCAC's website, www.caribbeancouncilcanada.org and also on the SVGAT's website, www.vincytoronto.com. The CCAC is staging a 5km walk-a-thon to raise funds for its scholarship program on Saturday, August 19 at Morningside Park in Scarborough. Part of the amount that each member association collects from pledges is given back to the participating organization. The CCAC is hosting its annual seniors' event on Saturday, September 9, 2017 at the Dennis Timbrell Resource Centre, 29 St. Dennis Drive, Don Mills near to the Ontario Science Centre from 10:00 a.m. The information is being circulated to our community through emails.

Banner & Logo

The board of directors has agreed to invest in a banner for the Association which will include the name and contact information of the organization as well as a logo. The logo was selected from among ones submitted back in 2008 when a competition to design one was attempted. A picture of the logo and proposed banner is circulated for viewing. The banner will be first used by the SVGAT's participants in the Toronto Caribbean Carnival parade on August 5.

Occurred Events

2017 Local GTA Picnic and Walk-a-Thon

The annual walk-a-thon which was to end with a Picnic was held at Northwood Park on Sunday, June 25 in place of the usual monthly meeting. The started from the Jane & Finch Mall and finished at Northwood Park but the picnic was cancelled due to the weather. 9 persons took part in the walk which others were at the park preparing for the arrival of the walkers and others collected pledges but could not walk. The pledges received so far amount to \$3,660.00. Our sincere thanks to all who participated both by walking, collecting pledges and sponsoring the walkers. It was previously determined that the proceeds from this year's walk would go to help to offset the arrears for the Adopt-A-Child Program.

2017 Unity Picnic Bus Trip

There were 3 buses use for this year's bus trip and from all appearance there were no major issues with any of the buses. Fares remained the same as last year – \$50.00 for adults and \$30.00 for children under 12 years. Buses departed from the usual areas in West Toronto and in Scarborough. This is no longer regarded as a fundraiser but merely as a convenience for those who want to attend the Unity Picnic but have no vehicles or cannot drive. When the figures are finalized it is expected that it may be a break even event. Many thanks to the organizing committee, bus coordinators, ticket sellers and passengers to contributed.

2017 Unity Picnic – July 15

Once again there was good weather for the picnic and those who attended seemed to have enjoyed themselves. It however appears as though the crowd was lower that the peak of 10,000 to 15,000. The entertainment included artistes who had recently competed in the 2017 Vincy Mas in St. Vincent. A raffle was held and a souvenir booklet was produced. Following the picnic there was an uproar that has made its way through the SVG community in Canada, the www.ways and the local radio stations and newspapers in SVG when it was learnt that the Leader of the Opposition in the SVG Parliament, Dr. Godwin Friday was denied a request to address the crowd at the picnic. It is hoped that commonsense will prevail and the matter can be discussed in an amicable manner in order to contain any adverse effects on the future of the picnic and other Associations related events. The SVGAT sincerely thanks all those who in one way or the other supported the event.

Update on Events Being Planned

2017 Boat Cruise

The event is on Friday, August 11 aboard Enterprise 2000. The event is jointly coordinated by SVGAT and Toronto SVG Support Group. The 150 Early bird tickets have sold. Regular tickets are still available at \$55.00 each. It has been determined by the two joint coordinated parties that part proceeds from the event be donated to the School for Children with Special Needs in SVG.

2017 Independence Anniversary Celebrations

St. Vincent and the Grenadines celebrates the anniversary of its Independence from Great Britain which took place on October 27, 1979. As usual, the Association continues to organize a number of activities to mark the occasion here in Toronto. The events include:

Thanksgiving Church Service – Sunday, October 22 at Wesley Chapel Free Methodist Church;

Independence Gala – Saturday, October 28, Woodbine Banquet & Convention Centre;

Flag Raising Ceremony – Toronto City Hall on October 26;

Community Discussions – Sunday, October 29. To be finalized.

Eye Glasses for SVG

We continue to appeal to members of our community to donate eye glasses so that we can them to St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the Lions Club South to match up with persons in need of them. The Club will work closely with opticians on an ongoing basis to help the less fortunate who are in need of them. Persons are asked to bring whatever glasses they have along with the prescription (if possible).

Correspondence:

OUTGOING –

1. Communication with various other companies re advertisement for boat cruise
2. Communication with various other companies regarding Independence Anniversary celebrations

INCOMING

- a) Communication with principals of Fairhall and Tourama Government Schools
- b) Inquiry from Kenichia Charles, student at UWI regarding clarification of scholarship program
- c) Various communication from CCAC regarding its activities – scholarship program, pen initiative, walk-a-thon and seniors event
- d) From Malcolm Garraway of the New Democratic Toronto Support Group regarding the UPC's decision to not allow Dr. Friday to address the attendees at the SVG Unity Picnic

Committee chairs for the respective committees will entertain questions and comments with respect to their particular portfolios.