



St. Leonard's Society of Canada | Société St-Léonard du Canada

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May 25, 2017

Memo to Stakeholders of St. Leonard's Society of Canada (SLSC)

Dear Stakeholders and Friends of SLSC,

As many of you know, St. Leonard's Society of Canada (SLSC) has recently gone through a period of transition. Changes include revisions to the structure of our membership, the retirement of long-time Executive Director Elizabeth White in December 2016, and Anita Desai becoming Acting Executive Director in January 2017.

The Board of Directors is pleased to put forward this memo to our stakeholders to highlight some of the major changes within SLSC and to formally address the impact that they have had. In the past 5 years, the most substantial change has been the reduction in the number of agencies affiliated with St. Leonard's Society of Canada from 12 to 7. Our affiliate agencies are:

- St. Leonard's Society of North Vancouver
- St. Leonard's House Windsor
- St. Leonard's Society of Peterborough
- St. Leonard's House Trenton
- St. Leonard's Society of Sudbury
- House of Hope – Ottawa
- Maison Cross Roads – Montreal (Associate agency)

SLSC continues to operate in a sustainable and energetic manner with this group of agencies. In planning for staff changeover, and recognizing a need to refocus on key values of the organization and its membership, two members' planning sessions were held in June 2015 and February 2016.

Based on feedback from the planning sessions, by the end of 2016 the Board of Directors of SLSC completed the following operations to ensure that the corresponding five action items called for by the membership were undertaken in a timely and effective manner:

1. **Clarifying the relationship of the society with members** – A 'Renewal Strategy Working Group' was formed to begin this process, and continues to carry out work in this area. This work included consulting with all affiliates to ensure that the relationship between all current member agencies with the National are strong, and that any concerns are being identified and addressed.
2. **Preparing a federal election brief** – A 'Smart on Crime' document was prepared ahead of the 2015 Federal election and circulated widely to MPs, as well as to new Ministers following the election. Additionally, SLSC prepared several 'infographics' which were circulated in the weeks approaching the election over social media.
3. **Conducting an external needs assessment** – A survey of external partners from government and other NGOs was undertaken, along with an internal survey of the membership to support Action Item #1. Findings indicated that our external profile is excellent, and our internal profile was also largely positive; however, members were understandably frustrated by SLSC's limited capacity to meet member needs as in the past

due to having to 'do more with less' since National voluntary sector funding from government partners had not increased in over two decades.

4. **Developing new sources of funding** – SLSC continues to seek funding through research contracts as our research work (which also contributes to policy development) is seen as one of the most significant contributions to the membership. Since 2016, SLSC has secured funding for workshops and new research that support affiliate interests and promote best evidence-based practice.
5. **Increase society membership** – Ongoing; however, the Board recognizes the value of working with agencies who are engaged with SLSC rather than only expanding for the sake of growing numbers.

In early 2017, after having successfully guided SLSC through the renewal phase, the Renewal Strategy Working Group was renamed the Planning and Priorities Working Group. New terms of reference were set, and the new approved mandate includes: creating a communications strategy; ensuring that the operational practices of SLSC are engaging the membership and serving the priorities of the organization; and, continuing to support new agency engagement. Additionally, the Board has moved to monthly meetings (from three times a year) to be able to respond more rapidly to any issues which may arise. Executive Directors of affiliate agencies are also meeting on a monthly basis to increase capacity to share ideas and meaningful information. These shifts have been received favourably and are seen to be working effectively.

Further to the outcomes of the planning sessions, the changeover in management at the Executive Director level has been a smooth one. Anita Desai brings seven years of experience working as the Research and Policy Advisor for SLSC under the supervision and mentorship of Elizabeth White. Ms. Desai's familiarity with the operations of the organization and regular contact with government and other partners in her previous role has ensured that SLSC maintains the well-established ties to SLSC's external network. Indications of the success of maintaining this type of contact are reflected by SLSC's recent securing of government funding to support the development of a 'Train the Trainer in Peer Mentoring' Workshop.

Amidst this variety of changes, the Board of Directors is pleased with the financial trajectory of SLSC going forward. SLSC has a healthy current financial position, and an operating model that allows for balanced budgets for the current year and the foreseeable future. SLSC has recently commenced a multi-year funding cycle with the support of Public Safety Canada, at an increased rate over past years. This further enhances the financial stability of the organization. Therefore, given the sound financial management of the organization through this transitional period, the Board does not foresee any need to consider increases to the current affiliate fee structure.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of St. Leonard's Society of Canada, I welcome any questions or concerns you have regarding the viability of our organization.

Sincerely

Monica Ross, President
St. Leonard's Society of Canada