

**PARISH AND REGIONAL COUNCILS COVID-19 PANDEMIC CHRONICLES
(2020-2022)**

REGION	North York Region
Name of Council/Region	St. Patrick's Parish, Markham
Name of President/s For Years	2019-2021 Marlene Mogado; 2022-2023 Lalita D'souza

New and Unique Council Adaptations:

The council's last meeting in-person was held on March 11, 2020, the same day a global call from the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID 19 a global pandemic. Immediately following, the Ontario government declared a state of emergency on March 17, 2020. Soon after, the local Health Department issued restrictions on social gatherings, in-person interactions, and recommended physical distancing, use of masks and social isolating.

During this time, some members were already familiar with the practice of "teleconferencing". The Executive immediately explored how it can continue some of its activities already planned and scheduled. Fortunately, the council had sufficient funds to enter a contract for zoom access during meetings and events held by virtual means. The council's first virtual meeting by zoom was held on April 5, 2020. As a result, no meetings were missed and the use by virtual means continues to this day.

The contract for a website started a few months later. The council was fortunate to have members who were experienced in the use of zoom and the website. Volunteers came forward to assist others in the use of zoom to minimize any distractions during meetings and events held virtually. However, the maintenance of the website is a significant challenge up to this day as the council continues to face the lack of experienced volunteers to maintain and post timely updates of information for members. Currently, the council continue to allocate funds in the budget to support the functioning of both zoom and maintenance of the website. The use of virtual means to conduct and participate in meetings, fundraisers, retreats, and attendance to other events such as workshops and retreats held outside of council-sponsored activities: (zoom, webinars) were considerable, and in constant use.

Health breaks were part of the virtual meetings: included were virtual workouts, stretching, and meditation. Games to break the monotony of the virtual meetings were added to the agenda of the general members' meetings.

Self introduction of each member attending the virtual meeting were encouraged.

Each member would occasionally relate experiences affecting their lives, these were held after the adjournment of the meetings. These allowed members to share with each other some personal experiences.

A Sunshine Committee was formed consisting of volunteer members who reached out to others by phone, and engaged with conversations of topics that were of interest. This was to keep a regular contact by phone with members and know their needs and share how we were feeling especially during the lockdown.

The complete revision of the Council's Manual of Policy and Procedure was conducted through zoom during the years covered by physical restrictions. Review of topics that were included in the manual commenced as early as 2021. Over several months, sections of the manual were sent by email to general members to review. Discussions and approval of the sections were included in the agenda of the general membership meetings over the period beginning early 2022. This process lasted for more than a year. The full manual was finished and distributed to all members by email and posted on the website in 2023. The result was a lengthy process, although sections approved were in place for use and referenced when needed.

Highlights and Challenges:

Survey of members was conducted on-line to solicit feedback about the use of the new virtual means of communication. Included were questions that asked suggestions as to activities which can be conducted by use of virtual means. Suggestions received were considered and majority were implemented.

- Large fundraisers such as dinner/dance parties and other similar events were not conducted, therefore the council's fundraising efforts were not as successful as in previous years. It limited the council in its donation to agencies as compared to previous years where events were held in-person.
- Virtual means made it easier to conduct, attend meetings and presentations held by other councils. However, the absence of in-person contact, and social interaction limited members to know more about other members.
- The meetings and events held virtually allowed more members to attend than when held in-person before the pandemic. This can be explained by mobility issues and convenience in time, especially because some members are elderly and depended on family members for transportation.

Anniversary Milestones (Members and Council Milestones):

In 2020, 2021 and part of 2022, the council conducted events through virtual means. The events were anniversaries which the council annually celebrated in-person in previous years. Among these were milestones such as Our Lady of Good Council Anniversary, Advent and Lenten retreats, Mother's Day Tea to celebrate Mother's Day, Indigenous community celebrations to coincide with National Indigenous People's Day, National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, St. Patrick's Day, and Easter Monday with dinner for seniors at a non-profit

Senior's Home. Some of member's birthday milestones were also celebrated by zoom. Towards the end of 2022, limited attendance in person for some events began. The experience of virtual events was joyful, everyone became closer in their relationship, and a noticeable increase in attendance occurred. Speakers were invited to provide presentations for topics of interest such as mental health, well-being, and meal preparations for healthy heart. Every meeting was conducted with different involvement not normally experienced before the pandemic.

In 2022, the creation of the CWL Blessed Ozanam Council commenced and some members moved to the new council. The smooth transition was experienced in both councils.

Fund Raising events and Organizations supported:

Since in-person activities were limited and restricted all fundraising events were conducted by virtual means, posting on the website, posters in the church lobby, notices distributed through emails to members, friends, families and businesses in the area.

These fundraisers included: Plant sales such as poinsettia, easter lilies and hydrangeas. The distribution of the plants was at a residence in 2020, then at a local nursery in 2021, and in 2022 at the parish hall. Non-perishable items and Christmas decors were prepared, packed, and sold at the parish hall. "Sweet Creations", the theme of the successful event has become a Christmas fundraiser, now in its 2nd year.

Special fundraisers to help survivors and victims of human trafficking were solicited in 2020-2021 after a presentation of the same subject was held in 2019. Members, friends, and families responded with purchased items and monetary contributions. Drop-off points were assigned to collect the items and the packages were handed to an organization (U-R Home Awareness) for distribution. Other recipients of the fundraisers were organizations such as the Markham Food Bank, Youth Unlimited, families supported by the St. Vincent de Paul, Markham Seniors in a low-income Home, an Indigenous Organization, and the Ukraine Aid in 2021.

Attendance and Participation at League and Other Events:

In 2020 and 2021, events at the League (TDC and National) were held virtually. Members along with Executive officers attended workshops, retreats, and regional meetings, all available only by virtual means.

In 2022 some events were held in-person. These were the Development Day, conventions, and regional meetings. Some Executive and general members were in attendance in-person.

We conclude that: the experiences during the pandemic shared by everyone in our council is unique. It demonstrates the values we all share and continues to uphold – love, compassion, and service to the greater community inspired by our love of Christ. Along with our talents, skills, and creativeness we were able to accomplish remarkable undertakings. There is no doubt that this will continue in the years to come.

March 2021 – Easter Fundraisers (lilies/hydrangea sales) – recipient: Markham Food Bank and Donations to families supported by St. Vincent de Paul.



Christmas Fundraiser – Dec. 2021 (poinsettia sales) – Donations: Markham Food Bank



Easter Fundraiser – April 2022



Easter Luncheon at Cedarcrest Manor – April 2022



Induction Ceremony – April 2022



2022 Induction Ceremony



101st TDC Convention, 2022

Youth Awards – June 2022



Summer get-together – 2022

Screenshot May 2021 – Mother’s Day celebration.



Written and submitted by Marlene Mogado, Past President 2019-2021

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