



## **FACE OF POVERTY CONSULTATION**

**A Multifaith Coalition Working to Eliminate Poverty**

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Annual Report – January – December 2010

The Face of Poverty has representatives on the Community Coalition to End Poverty NS (CCEP NS), the Affordable Energy Coalition, KAIROS Halifax Cluster, the Community Advocates Network, Community Action on Housing, and the Steering Committee for a Poverty Reduction forum in the Fall sponsored by the Health Promotion Clearing House of the NS Department of Health Promotion and Protection. Two members of our group participated at the Truro conference. We had a display and distributed our most recent brochure - on implementing a poverty reduction strategy in Nova Scotia - at both Truro and the Dartmouth panel on poverty and homelessness on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, October 17.

In addition, we are observers at the monthly meetings of the Province's Standing Committee on Community Services. We also provide support for others' activities such the Campaign 2000 national poverty reduction strategy, the Anglican Justice Camp, the Kairos struggle against the arbitrary cessation of federal government funding, the Inter-faith Climate Change Vigil, and Dalhousie Legal Aid's questions about the nature of the government's proposed revisions to the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program and whether it would remove the 70 percent claw-back of market earnings of social assistance recipients. We provide information on upcoming events to our members and to our participating faith groups. For instance, we discussed the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board's November hearings on the regulation of the payday loan industry. This was brought to the attention of Anglican Bishop, Sue Moxley, and she presented a brief to the public session of the hearings, expressing the concern of churches about the excessive interest charged to a largely vulnerable clientele.

Merlin Watt, the Halifax co-ordinator for the Make Poverty History Campaign addressed us, providing an overview of the history and activities of the Campaign. Activities are planned in more than 100 countries this year. We also viewed the movie *Four Feet Up*, about one family's struggle with poverty, and hope to provide a facilitator to use the movie as a resource for groups studying poverty.

Instead of our annual November Service to reflect on the 1989 House of Commons unanimous vote to end child poverty by 2000, we co-sponsored, with the Atlantic Lutheran Campus Ministry, a panel on faith perspectives on poverty and a discussion on what we can afford to do to reduce poverty, held at Dalhousie University. The discussion was lively and it was felt that churches must continue to update their membership about the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Members of the Face of Poverty participated in the Back to Balance Consultation for the 2010 provincial budget and submitted a written brief calling for increased funding to implement a poverty reduction strategy and an increase in provincial revenues through the income tax rather

than through the sales tax which is regressive, putting the greatest burden on those with low incomes. We have written to provincial and federal ministers on a variety of issues.

We re-assessed our organizational needs, including a review of our Vision and Mission Statements, how our activities reflect them, and who would focus their energies on particular activities and events. While there were minor changes to our Vision and Mission Statements, they continue to reflect the concerns that have been our focus since the Face of Poverty Consultation was formed a decade ago. We are moving to a calendar year for our reporting and will hold our Annual Meeting in January of each year.

#### Membership

Our membership from the Anglican, Baptist, Buddhist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic and United Church groups has been expanded by active participation from the Sonlife Church and the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre.

Respectfully submitted

Michael Bradfield  
Secretary