



FACE OF POVERTY CONSULTATION
A Faith-Based Coalition Working to Eliminate Poverty

<http://users.eastlink.ca/~lutheranchurch/Poverty.html>

2015 Annual Report

The Face of Poverty Consultation is a faith-based coalition formed in 2001. It has included members from various faith communities and organizations: Anglican, Baptist, Buddhist, Brunswick Street Mission, Lutheran, Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, Presbyterian, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Sonlife Church, and United Church. The coalition works to increase poverty awareness and to encourage action by its members and faith communities, as well as to promote policy change by government to improve conditions for those living in poverty.

The activities of the Face of Poverty Consultation reflect its three-part mission statement.

Members are called to

1. be in solidarity with the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable, and the alienated by increasing our understanding of the painful realities imposed by poverty and breaking the cycle of indifference to problems that affect all of society.

In 2015, the Face of Poverty Consultation increased its membership. It continued to build links with other groups working on poverty and housing issues, including the Affordable Energy Coalition, the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia, the KAIROS Halifax Cluster, and the Benefits Reform Action Group (BRAG). Coalition members benefited from presentations by Bob Parker of the Community Child Welfare Board and Nick Jennery of Feed Nova Scotia.

During the year, Face of Poverty members attended several community events that involved those with lived experience of poverty. These included Income Assistance Town Halls that allowed individuals an opportunity to discuss the realities of being Income Assistance recipients, the impacts of funding changes, and recommendations for improving the system. As well, on October 17th, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, there was a First-Voice panel discussion, rally, and march. Face of Poverty members also participated in a provincial day-long event called *Austerity and ESIA (Employment Services and Income Assistance) Transformation: Impacts, Opportunities, Action* organized by the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia (CSEP-NS).

2. educate our respective faith groups as to the causes and impacts of economic, political, and social inequity on the human condition. This requires new attitudes and sacrifices to change patterns of power and policy.

In 2015, the Face of Poverty Consultation made a presentation to the Halifax Presbyterial United Church Women on the film *Four Feet Up*. In addition, members facilitated two sessions on poverty at Bedford United Church. One member gave a presentation on taxation and poverty to the Halifax Presbytery and to the United Church Women's group in Middle LaHave.

The coalition regularly circulates announcements about poverty-related events to its members and participating faith groups. In May, two members took part in the ecumenical Canada-wide Justice Tour that focused on poverty and climate justice. Prior to the federal election, the United Churches of Dartmouth and Cole Harbour and the Face of Poverty Consultation held an all-candidates forum in Dartmouth. As part of the October *Chew on This!* Campaign, members distributed postcards encouraging voters to ask federal candidates to endorse the national anti-poverty strategy proposed by Citizens for Public Justice. In November, the Face of Poverty Consultation held a Lunch and Learn on *Food Security and A Living Wage* with Dr. Christine Saulnier, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Nova Scotia.

3. speak truth and justice to the powerful so that they may understand that the attainment of full human dignity is a blessing for all society and join the work to create a society that is compassionate and just.

This year the Face of Poverty Consultation continued to be present as observers at the monthly meetings of the Standing Committee of the Department of Community Services. Following a presentation by Housing Nova Scotia, members sought additional information on current housing policies. In February, the Consultation presented a brief on the detrimental impacts of payday loans to the Utility and Review Board. This led to a request from the Senate Committee on Banking, Trade, and Commerce to comment on their Bill S-210, to significantly lower the definition of the criminal interest rate from 60 per cent. A member took part in the Nova Scotia Budget "lock-up" in April. Along with the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia, a member of Face of Poverty met with Finance Minister Diana Whalen to discuss the Broten Taxation Review. Another member participated in the Department of Community Services engagement sessions regarding the proposed transformation of the Employment Services and Income Assistance Program. Our website has also attracted the attention of the media and those seeking assistance.

The Face of Poverty Consultation remains appreciative of the ongoing support of its faith communities. New members are always welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Bradfield, Recording Secretary