



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

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

2014 Annual Report

The Face of Poverty Consultation works to increase poverty awareness and encourage action among our members and within our faith communities, as well as to promote policy change by government to improve conditions for those living in poverty.

Formed in 2001, our membership has included 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 representatives.

Our yearly activities reflect our three-part mission and focus - coalition members, faith communities, and the "powerful."

Our **Mission Statement** calls us 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 2014, the Face of Poverty Consultation continued to build links with other groups involved in poverty issues, specifically the Affordable Energy Coalition, the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia, and the KAIROS Halifax Cluster. Deborah Dickey of the Dartmouth Family Centre briefed our January meeting about their Community Food Centre Project. During the year, members attended several community events, including a forum by Citizens for Public Justice, a presentation by the Honourable Joanne Bernard, Minister of Community Services, at the Public Good Society Annual General Meeting, a panel discussion on *Navigating the Legal System - Barriers & Best Practices* by Dalhousie Legal Aid Service, a Housing First presentation, a First Voice panel discussion and march to the legislature on October 17th, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a Day of Reflection and Renewal hosted by the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia, and a homeless memorial service. The Face of Poverty Consultation encouraged organisations to prepare briefs on the impacts payday loans have on low-income individuals. These will be presented to the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board on February 10, 2015. As in past years, we have assisted researchers and the media.

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.

The Face of Poverty Consultation is available to give presentations and facilitate activities or discussions on poverty topics. We regularly circulate announcements about poverty-related events to our members and to participating faith groups, and have expanded our website to include some of the briefs we have submitted. On October 16th, World Food Day, we held a Lunch and Learn at Christ Church in Dartmouth on the topic *Food Banks and Beyond: Solutions for Eliminating Hunger in Our Community*. There was participation by Voices for Food Security in Nova Scotia, a project of the Food Action Research Centre (FoodARC) at Mount Saint Vincent University, St. Paul's Family Resources Institute, the Dartmouth Family Centre, and a food bank user. We plan to have an event to follow up on the solutions proposed by those in attendance.

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.

In 2014, the Face of Poverty Consultation maintained a presence as observers at the monthly meetings of the Standing Committee on Community Services. We wrote to Premier Stephen McNeil encouraging him to pursue an active poverty-reduction strategy and reminding cabinet ministers of the need for inter-departmental co-operation to deal with issues of poverty. As in the past, we submitted a brief to the House of Commons Finance Committee budget consultations. In addition, we presented a brief to the Broten Review of Nova Scotia's Taxation and Regulations, endorsed by several of our members' faith communities. The Face of Poverty Consultation was among the anti-poverty groups asked to discuss the Broten Review report with the Minister of Finance. We also made a submission to the OneNS consultation.

Our briefs focused on the ethical issues of government tax and expenditure decisions. We pointed out that it is not the size of government debt that is important, but the fact that the increasing debt has resulted from government cuts to taxes on the most prosperous Canadians, who also received the largest gains in incomes. Moreover, misleading information about deficits and debt continue to give rise to cuts in government programs, the largest of which (health, education, social assistance) are investments in Canada's future citizens. Another ethical issue addressed was the proposal to deal with our demographic problem of an aging population by retaining more of the foreign students who study in Nova Scotia, many of whom come from countries much poorer than our province.

The Face of Poverty Consultation is grateful for the ongoing support of our faith communities and would welcome new membership to reflect greater diversity.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Bradfield
Recording Secretary