



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

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

2016 Annual Report

Formed in 2001, the Face of Poverty Consultation has included members from various faith communities and organizations: Anglican, Baptist, Buddhist, Brunswick Street Mission, Lutheran, Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre, New Beginning Ministries, Presbyterian, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Sonlife Church, and the United Church. We work to increase poverty awareness and to encourage action by our members and faith communities, as well as to promote policy change by governments to improve conditions for those living in poverty.

The activities of the Face of Poverty Consultation reflect our mission statement:

1. to 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.

During the year, Face of Poverty members attended community events that involved those with lived experience of poverty. These included the Province's consultations for the Transformation of the ESIA (Employment Support and Income Assistance) program. FACE members also participated in a provincial two-day conference, Working Together to End Poverty in Nova Scotia, organized by the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia (CSEP) and the Colchester Anti-Poverty Network to strengthen collaboration between anti-poverty groups. This resulted in agreement to get more diverse voices involved to understand and eliminate poverty and to initiate an End Poverty Nova Scotia Forum.

We continue to build links with other groups working on poverty and housing issues, including the Affordable Energy Coalition, the CSEP, the United Way working group on Poverty, the KAIROS Halifax Cluster, the Benefits Reform Action Group (BRAG), and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). Consultation members benefited from attending workshops and education sessions such as Systemic Change, the Memorial Service for the Homeless, a presentation on the BIG (Basic Income Guarantee), and the expansion plans for the North End Community Health Centre.

2. to 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 2016, the Face of Poverty Consultation increased its membership. The Consultation regularly circulates announcements about poverty-related events to its members and faith groups. In September, we sponsored a well-attended municipal all-candidates forum in District 5, North Dartmouth, at the Grace United Church. Our website has links to information on poverty and our members are available as resource persons or to make presentations.

3. to 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.

The Face of Poverty Consultation continues to be observers at the monthly meetings of the Standing Committee of the Department of Community Services. We have sent letters to the Committee and to the Department concerning Income Assistance Reform and asking for consideration of a Child Advocate Office for Nova Scotia. Representatives from the Face of Poverty Consultation, Community Advocates Network, and the Benefits Reform Action Group met twice with the Mayor of Halifax to ask that the City give more attention to issues of poverty over which it has some jurisdiction, such as housing.

We presented a brief to the Federal Budget consultation. We also responded to the provincial budget with a brochure critiquing its emphasis on austerity, given the capacity of the Province to increase its revenues by having a more progressive tax system.

Our website continues to attract the attention of the media and of people seeking assistance.

The Face of Poverty Consultation appreciates the ongoing support of its faith communities and other groups. New members are always welcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Bradfield,
Recording Secretary

“Had I but one wish for [our faith communities]...it would be that they come to see the difference between charity and justice. Charity is a matter of personal attributes; justice, a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to alleviate the effects of injustice; justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation...” William Sloane Coffin, *Credo* (pp. 62-63)