

The Public Good Society of Dartmouth

Web site of Marilyn More, MLA - www.marilynmore.ca - Dec 1, 2007

What can a group of citizens do to tackle community issues? Well, you would have been inspired by the first Annual General Meeting of The Public Good Society of Dartmouth. It was held November 14th at the Celtic Corner Public House. Twenty people gathered to hear what this group is doing and ended up joining the Society.

“What is right? What is just? What is for the public good?” A sense of social justice inspired Joseph Howe to ask these questions about what would make this province the best it could be for its citizens in the 1800s. In late 2004, community members representing residents, business, health, community services, voluntary sector, and government formed a non-profit organization The Public Good Society of Dartmouth to make our community the best it can be for the people who live, work and play here.

We recognized that working together and pooling our resources and knowledge would better address complex social issues facing the Dartmouth area. Initial steering committee members and resource people included local community health board coordinators, developer, educator, two municipal councillors (including Becky Kent), Department of Community Services officials, municipal social policy analyst, non-profit board chair and me as MLA. Everyone’s leadership, hard work and willingness to take a non-traditional approach, were instrumental in moving the concept and good will forward into action.

Committed to informed decision-making, developing partnerships, and building on what’s working in the community, The Public Good Society is becoming a catalyst for positive change. Not only is our group raising awareness and understanding about the root causes of social issues, it is helping to identify gaps in service and policy AND to broaden support services for vulnerable persons. This is a win-win objective since improved coordination of community-based services delivered by all levels of government and the voluntary sector is a more efficient use of human and financial resources.

In 2006 The Public Good Society undertook a Core Service User Survey of people using Feeding Others of Dartmouth in Downtown Dartmouth. We wanted to hear first-hand about the well-being of those surveyed and where they considered the gaps in services offered in our community to be. This initial project was funded by Service Canada. The survey results and recommendations were widely shared among government departments and community agencies.

Based on this information and the expressed wishes of those surveyed, the Board of Directors developed a proposal titled “Connections that WORK”. It was successfully presented to the Canada – Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework and received 2007-08 provincial funding. Working with other community-based programs, the project supports many of the survey respondents and others to access upgrading and work opportunities.

Now we’re ready to create new opportunities for more people to become involved in The

Public Good Society. Several new people joined the working board and others took out memberships.

We're proving as Margaret Mead once said, "a small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

To learn more, join the Society or help in any way, please call (463-7619) or drop-in to The Public Good Society, 47 Wentworth Street, Dartmouth.

To discuss this and other issues, please contact Marilyn at 463-6673 or marilynmoremla@ns.aliantzinc.ca.