

Community Dispatch

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CHAIRMAN'S ROUNDTABLE ON THE NONPROFIT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR: FOLLOW-UP TO THE NOVEMBER 1, 2006 FORUM – PART 5

This Community Dispatch highlights the happenings of the Roundtable's November 1, 2006 Forum, which launched their Community Plan to support Halton's Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector. The Forum also included a presentation of findings and analysis from Community Development Halton's Nonprofit Human Resources Study, as well as a community capacity building seminar by Ian Hill of 'The Changing Point.' To all a joyous Holiday Season and may 2007 carry the seeds for social justice and peace.

Joey Edwardh

The Launch: November 1, 2006

With approximately 200 participants, the Roundtable formally launched their Community Plan at the Burlington Convention Centre on November 1, 2006. As described in previous *Dispatches*, the Plan was a result of a highly consultative process which engaged the community throughout. This included:

- A series of Community Dialogues
- A survey of Halton's funders
- Information from Community Development Halton's study of the sector's human resources
- A June 15, 2006 Forum where 300 participants received the Roundtable's recommendations and developed the Plan's specific strategies and actions

The resulting Plan identified five strategic directions to promote a stronger and more sustainable nonprofit and voluntary sector in Halton. Specifically, these are:

- Enhanced access to information
- Networking, collaboration and amalgamation
- Restructuring of funding

- Marketing, promotion and community awareness
- The formation of a Coordinating Body

A Coordinating Body for Halton

As the fifth strategic direction in the Roundtable's Community Plan, a Coordinating Body has been proposed as a vehicle to implement the Community Plan and its components. In particular, it will serve as a framework for actioning the four remaining directions, which will be achieved through the creation of a Champion Body, Working Groups and the support of a Coordinator. The following provides an overview of these components, which were presented to the community at the November 1st Launch.

The Body of Champions

Overseeing the operations of the Coordinating Body, the Body of Champions will be responsible for providing overall strategic direction and leadership to the initiative.

Mandate

- Work towards a vision for a thriving sector
- Establish Working Groups consistent with the Plan's four major strategic areas
- Begin the process of prioritizing and coordinating activities of the Working Groups
- Assess the feasibility of establishing a permanent coordinating body and make recommendations
- Assume responsibility for developing and executing a communications plan
- Facilitate a process to re-name and brand the initiative as it rolls-out into the community

Representation/Criteria

- The Body of Champions is to have strong representation from all three pillars of society –

nonprofit and voluntary sector, private sector and public sector

- Champions should possess qualities that reflect strong collaborative leadership e.g. ability to marshal and leverage resources, shared leadership, catalyst for collaborative processes, strong decision making skills and leadership defined by integrity and commitment

Working Groups

Four Working Groups will assume primary responsibility for executing the specific actions and strategies outlined in the Plan. Groups are organized around the Plan's strategic directions, which are identified on the first page of this *Dispatch*.

Mandate

- Understand recommendations and strategies related to their strategic direction
- Recommend priorities and actions to the Body of Champions
- Recommend and develop action plans to support these priorities
- Implement action plans
- Report to the Body of Champions on the progress of work

Representation/Criteria

- The Working Groups are to have strong representation from all three pillars of society – nonprofit and voluntary sector, private sector and public sector
- Working Group members may self-identify or be actively recruited through the Body of Champions

The Coordinator

The Coordinator will support all operational aspects of the Coordinating Body. More details will be provided in the upcoming year.

A Coordinating Body for Halton: Your Thoughts

Attendees at the November 1st Launch were asked to share their thoughts on the proposed Coordinating Body for Halton's nonprofit and voluntary sector. Through a consensus raising process, 96% of participants endorsed the

Coordinating Body – in principle – as a viable option for moving the Plan forward. Those in attendance were then asked to comment on what they liked about the model and what they felt was missing. The following is a snap-shot of what was said:

What You Liked

Structure and Form

Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the general structure of the model, referring to it as “inclusive and clear” and a “set-up for success.” It was felt that its simple organization allowed for easy communication between the Body of Champions and Working Groups, and despite its simplicity, the model was seen as “all encompassing,” “holistic” and a “vehicle for action.” Others pointed to the distinctive mandates among working groups as a clear and tangible tool for implementing the model's objectives.

The *shared leadership* structure was also met with satisfaction, as was the “community driven” nature of the model. Participants were candid in acknowledging that their voices and ideas from the June 15th Forum (and throughout the process) had been captured and reflected as an outcome.

Essential to participants was the presence of a paid Coordinator to ensure the initiative “stays on-track” and responsibilities are not duplicated. Those in attendance went on to add that an administrative compliment would also be needed to support the model.

Capacity for Working Together

Throughout all facets of the Roundtable's work and fact gathering activities, stakeholders have placed a heightened emphasis on the need for organizations to enhance coordinative efforts. True to this sectoral thinking, November 1st participants saw the Coordinating Body as a neutral venue to facilitate a variety of cooperative opportunities. In particular, the model was seen as a potential catalyst for the coordination and sharing of services, as well as a vehicle for networking, partnering and increasing access to information.

Also of satisfaction to participants was the model's desire to be inclusive of both private and public sector representation. The cross-sectoral nature of the model was seen as an opportunity to build connections amongst sectors and capitalize on the skills that each has to offer.

Strength in Numbers

In a climate of advocacy chill and scarce resources, the formation of a collective body was seen as a necessary tool for sectoral advocacy and positioning. This includes the potential for fostering an enhanced profile, greater capacity for public awareness/ education and the ability "to promote the value of what we do". Others emphasized the potential of leveraging greater overall resources via the unified voice implicit in the model.

What You Felt was Missing: Considerations Moving Forward

While the proposed model was met with a high level of regard, participants pointed to a number of questions and concerns that must be addressed as the model grows and evolves.

The Availability of Resources

At the forefront of participant concerns was the availability of resources to sustain the model and its interrelated components. Conversely, participants questioned their own capacity to deploy resources in the context of existing workloads and demands in the community. In light of these comments, it is not surprising that more details are being requested regarding resource availability and the level of commitment expected from participating agencies. While the latter of these questions will be answered as the model evolves, Regional staff are exploring avenues to assist in the model's sustainability. However, the success of the initiative will depend on a strong contribution from all sectors – public, private and nonprofit.

Goals and Objectives

Participants noted the importance of ensuring clear goals and objectives as the model moves forward, including the establishment of timelines and performance indicators. A key first step in setting

these objectives will be undertaking a priority setting process once the Champion Body is assembled and operational.

Roles and Accountabilities

Details of who should be involved, how they should be selected and who they are accountable to were raised by participants. It was identified that clear criteria and job descriptions will be essential in getting the right people around the table. This included a number of individuals who suggested adopting a more balanced focus on the sector (away from the current emphasis on the human services), including a stronger role for the arts, culture, sports and recreation, faith and the environment.

Many also stressed the need to bring greater clarity to accountability structures, including a determination of where and to whom the Body of Champions should be responsible. Amongst these remarks were a number of queries regarding Halton Region's role as the Coordinating Body emerges and rolls-out into the community.

Local/Regional Variances

While the Plan speaks to strengthening the nonprofit and voluntary sector across Halton, several reflected on the need to be mindful of local variances, including Halton's urban/rural character. In balancing these needs, decision makers must be conscious of local differences while maintaining the broader vision and objectives of the plan.

The above observations will be taken into account as the Champion Body and Working Groups assemble and unfold over the coming months. Subsequent Dispatches will be prepared and released to provide updates on the progress of the initiative.

Interested in Knowing More? Request a Presentation

If you would like more details about the Community Plan and Coordinating Body, Regional staff welcome the opportunity to provide your organization and board members with a presentation. This will include information on how your organization can play a key role in moving

the Champion Body and/or Working Groups forward. To request a presentation, please contact Lori Kirkwood at 905-825-6000/1-866-442-5866 ext. 7058; by email at lori.kirkwood@halton.ca.

Halton's Nonprofit Human Resources Study:

For up-to-date findings on Community Development Halton's study of Halton's nonprofit human resources – including recent information presented at the November 1 Launch – please visit www.cdhalton.ca.

Ian Hill: "Leading the Heart of the Community in Changing Times"

Making his highly anticipated return to Halton, Ian Hill – community capacity builder and highly regarded motivational speaker – led participants through an afternoon seminar exploring our relationship with change. 'Why do we fear change?' and 'How can we stay relevant through changing times?' were two key questions posed by

Mr. Hill at the November 1st Launch. To achieve the type of change we want to see in our communities, Mr. Hill highlighted the importance of maintaining an action focus regardless of how much "junk" gets in our way.

Seminar participants are invited to follow-up with Mr. Hill (or dialogue with one another) by accessing his interactive blog at: www.halton.ca/VolunteerRoundtable.

Visit The Region of Halton Website

For current information on the initiative and its activities, please visit the Region of Halton website at www.halton.ca/VolunteerRoundtable.



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