

Small Communities – Big Ideas

September Discussion Series

In the May 27th discussion entitled "Community-based Decision Making: Democracy from the Bottom Up", presenter Frank Fawson challenged participants to explore ways to become more involved in issues affecting their own communities. Those in attendance expressed an interest in continuing the conversation in the future.

As we approach the Municipal Election season, it is important to consider ways we can become involved in the future of our communities beyond simply voting once every four years. This mini-series on citizen engagement entitled "**Communities and Government: Who's Speaking? Who's Listening?**" will invite participants to explore these ideas in a deeper way.

A mini-series on the topic of Citizen Engagement entitled "Communities and Government: Who's Speaking? Who's Listening?" will be held in September at the Lunenburg Library.

"Communities and Government: Who's Speaking? Who's Listening?"

- September 16th - "Public Consultation: Are They Really Listening?" featuring **Paul Pross**
- September 23rd - "Bringing Government Closer to Home" featuring **Alan Parry**
- September 30th - "Overcoming Barriers to Citizen Participation" featuring **Richard McBride**

- Time: All sessions begin at 7:30pm
- Where: Lunenburg Library, 19 Pelham St.
- Register: **634-8008**

September 16th

PUBLIC CONSULTATION: ARE THEY REALLY LISTENING?

Governments frequently use public consultations in making public policy decisions and in reviewing programs. Yet it is not a process that either the public or government officials like. Members of the public believe it is used manipulatively and officials find it disruptive and unreliable. In this first session of our series Paul Pross will look at the reasons for public consultation and discuss ways in which both governments and members of the public can make better use of it.

Paul Pross taught public administration and Canadian studies at Dalhousie University for nearly thirty years. Responsible for the design and establishment of the Dalhousie Programmes in Public Administration, he was the first Co-ordinator of the programmes and later Director of the School of Public Administration. He is the author, co-author or editor of a number of books and various articles on Canadian policy processes, natural resource administration, pressure group politics, lobbying and government publishing. He has participated in many public consultation exercises, including the current Voluntary Planning/DNR consultation on resource strategy, and conducted workshops for professional and community groups engaged in lobbying government. Paul lives at Indian Path, Lunenburg County.

September 23rd

BRINGING GOVERNMENT CLOSER TO HOME

In the last 50 years, the growth of governments is destroying the capability of Nova Scotia communities to respond to their needs as perceived by their citizens. Tax dollars generated from communities are no longer available for solving problems in those communities. Instead, they flow to Ottawa and Halifax where experts and specialists make many of the decisions that affect us. Alan Parry argues that it is increasingly difficult for citizens to become involved in decisions that affect them when these decisions are made so far away by people they don't know and are not easily accessible. He will invite you to decide whether you consider this to be a problem and if so, what should citizens do to begin to take back some of the authority for local decision-making.

Alan Parry is a retired consultant in Corporate and Strategic Planning. He was responsible for the development and installation of the School Based Management model for Edmonton Public Schools in the late 70's and consulted in Corporate and Strategic Planning to clients in all provinces in Canada as well as clients from Los Angeles, Rome and Moscow. Alan lives in the town of Lunenburg.

September 30th

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The final session in the series will consider barriers to citizen participation in governance by asking: "How can we ensure a fully inclusive process of participation open to all sectors of the community? What learning and personal development takes place in people as they become engaged in solving the problems of their communities? How can that development be encouraged?" Richard McBride will invite the group to assess some recent Nova Scotian examples as to the level of inclusiveness and the quality of the participation that different approaches achieved.

Richard McBride was a Professor of Biology at Dalhousie University for 22 years. He particularly enjoyed developing and teaching a course that encouraged non-science students to be active citizens in science-society issues. During the past 15 years he has worked with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) on community development projects in Africa and Asia. This work gave him first hand experience of the value and challenge of the participatory approach in solving community problems. Richard now lives full time in Union Square, Lunenburg County except for two months a year when he teaches in a community school in India.

