



# ***What is Advocacy?***

**Presentation by**

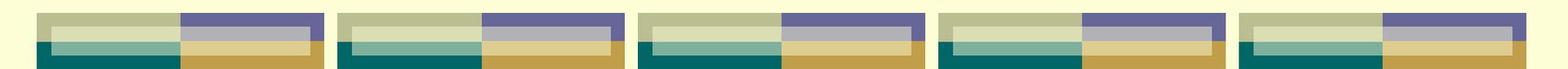
**Peter Clutterbuck,  
Social Planning Network of Ontario**

**to**

**The Art of Advocacy Workshop  
Halton Nonprofit Network**

**June 28, 2011**





## Definitions: Generic

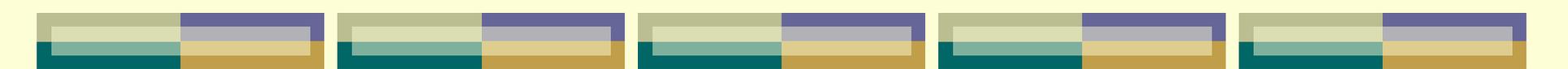
**Advocacy (n) -- “pleading for or supporting”**

**Advocate (v) -- “to defend (by action); to argue in favour of; to recommend publicly”**

**An Advocate (n) -- “one who pleads, intercedes, speaks for another; one who argues on behalf of a proposal or tenet”**

**(Oxford English Dictionary)**



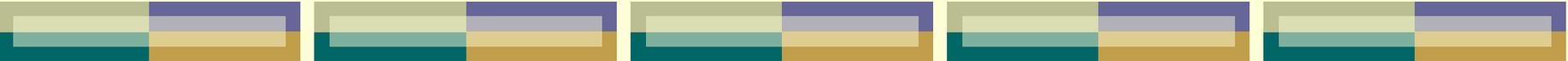


## Definitions: Purposeful Action

***Advocacy is “the act of speaking or of disseminating information intended to influence individual behaviour or opinion, corporate conduct, or public policy and law.”***  
(*Working Together*, VSI, 1999)

***“Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people’s lives.”***  
(The Advocacy Institute, Washington, D.C., 2001)





## Definitions: Specific to Nonprofits

*“Advocacy is the voice of voluntary sector organizations and the values and interests that they represent.*

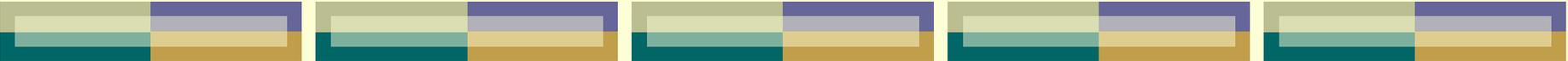
*It is the means that organizations use to articulate their concerns, perspectives and vision for society.*

*The voices are not those of individuals, but rather the numbers and constituencies of sector organizations.*

*These voices are an important thread in weaving the tapestry of an inclusive, just and civil society.”*

*(Advocacy Working Group, VSI, 2002)*

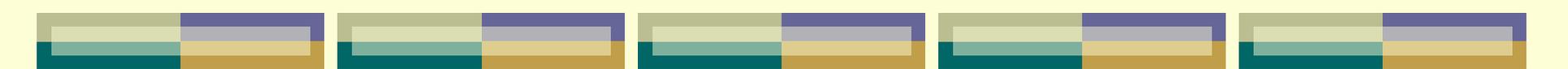




# Why Do Advocacy?

## Purposes:

- Advance an issue or cause
  - Assert or protect rights of an individual or group
  - Represent an interest, especially when there are barriers to being heard
  - Participate in democratic process (civil society)
- 



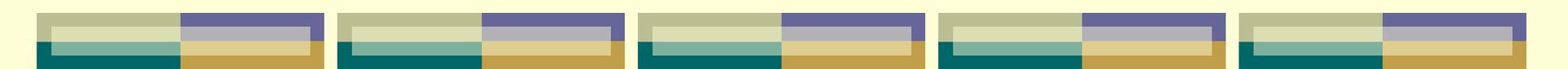
# Types of Advocacy: Individual

## Roles:

- Formal (legal, service)
- Self (“consumer”, participant)
- Familial (relative)
- Friend (personal supporter)

## Functions:

- Secure/protect rights or access to a resource or support
  - Make own decisions
  - Instrumental and expressive functions
- 



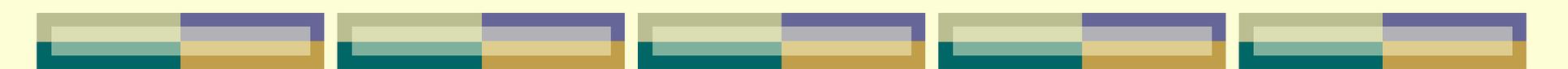
## Types of Advocacy: Collective

### Roles:

- **Legal**  
(class action)
- **Organizational**  
(service and/or policy mission)
- **Collaboratives**  
(coalitions, networks of mutual interest)

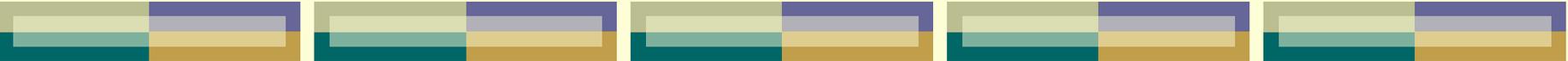
### Functions:

- **Establish group right**  
(e.g. to remedy)
  - **Ensure service to membership/clients**
  - **Change programs, policy, systems, attitudes &/or values**
  - **Strengthen capacity for achieving a shared goal**
- 



## Collective Advocacy Strategy

- Define issue/problem (motivation)
  - Establish evidence-based position (rationale)
  - Identify decision-maker & leverage point (focus)
  - Consider options & develop plan (action)
  - Cultivate internal champions (intelligence)
  - Anticipate counter-proposals & know fall-back limits (optimum-minimum requirements)
  - Escalate appropriately (timing)
  - Build broader political support (pressure)
- 



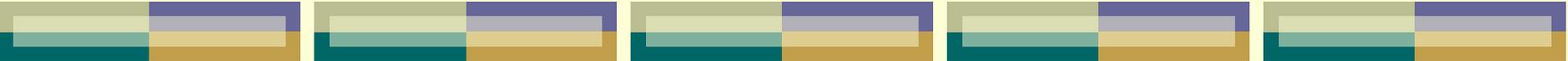
# Rewards and Risks of Collective Advocacy

## Rewards:

- **Achieve goals & objectives  
- fulfill mission**
- **Establish presence &  
recognition**
- **Build leadership &  
organizational capacity**
- **Contribute to civil society  
& democratic culture**

## Risks:

- **Spill-over political  
ramifications from difficult  
contested issues**
  - **Morale effects of failed  
advocacy initiatives**
  - **Jeopardizing registered  
charitable status**
- 



## Dual Mission Non-Profit Organization

**Non-Profit Organizations (Social Sector) have:**

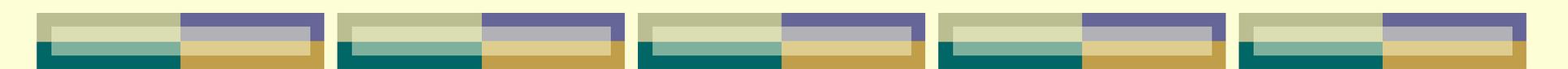
- ***A Service Mission . . .***

**. . . and may also have:**

- ***A Community Mission***

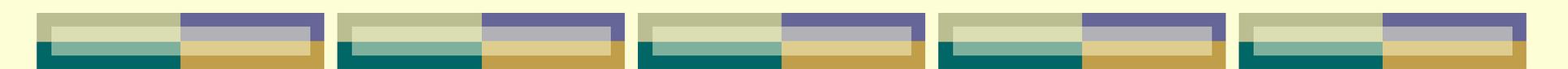
***Both have implications for the organization's advocacy role/activity.***





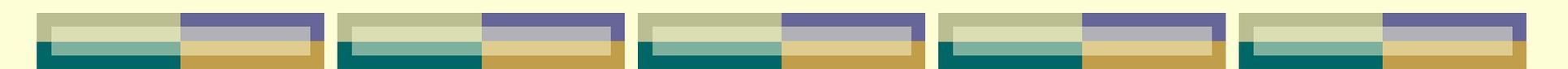
## Advocacy Related to Service Mission

- Environmental forces can affect direct service providers' ability to fulfill service mission (e.g. policy or regulatory change; funding cuts).
  - Organizational self-interest for non-profit charitable agencies to advocate just as private sector business does (e.g. Canadian Council of Executives, Canadian Federation of Independent Business).
  - Also, strategic for community service agencies to join together for collective advocacy effort (e.g. recent opposition to HRSDC's withdrawal of employment resource centre purchase of service agreements from community agencies and opening up to commercial bids).
  - Governance issue – Boards expect their management staff to act to protect the agency's organizational survival and capacity to fulfill service mission.
  - Board members – informed, advise, support management action -- may be asked to represent the organization's position appropriately to decision-makers.
- 



## Advocacy Related to *Community Mission*

- **Community Mission – beyond the strict fulfillment of direct service mandate and addresses organization’s broader commitments:**
    - >> to the interests and well-being of the group or population it serves
    - >> to policy, system, institutional change
    - >> to principles of equity, social justice, diversity, etc.
    - >> to the larger community or public interest.
  - **Grounds for service agencies framing a Community Mission:**
    - >> knowledge of service needs and the community
    - >> experience with the group that it serves
    - >> recognition of the inevitable limits of a service response to needs in the absence of supportive policy, systems and resource frameworks.
  - **A clear and coherent Community Mission can be focused on either Community Development action (agency service model and practices) or Advocacy action (proposed systems reform or policy development) or *both*.**
- 



## Two Examples

### St. Christopher House, Toronto

St. Chris defines two purposes for itself – service role and community development role. St. Chris identifies a range of issues with major policy implications – income supports, healthcare, immigrant settlement – and intentionally engages in policy development and advocacy far beyond its service mandate to address the larger systemic issues affecting its clients and community (e.g. Community Undertaking Social Policy, CUSP)

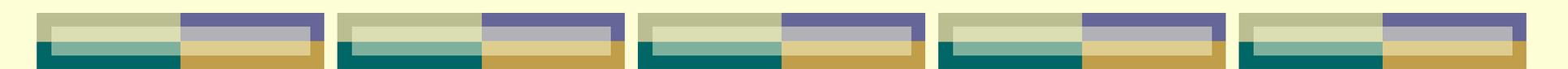
[www.stchrishouse.org](http://www.stchrishouse.org)

### Family Services Toronto

FST operationalizes its Community Mission through a Community Action Unit (community development) and a Social Reform Unit (policy advocacy). Since the early 1990s, FST has provided organizational leadership through its SRU to a major nationwide policy advocacy initiative to fight child poverty – CAMPAIGN 2000

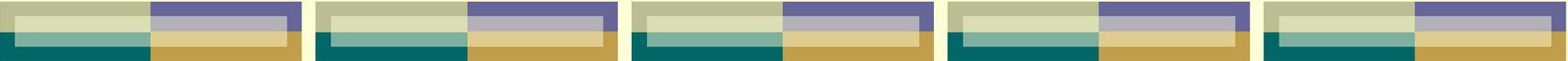
[www.familyservicetoronto.org](http://www.familyservicetoronto.org)





## Implications for Governance

- **Board choice and clarity about its *full* mission. Framing a Community Mission should be a carefully studied and considered Board exercise – a policy decision in itself.**
  - **Minimally, Board members must be kept informed of agency's community development and/or advocacy work and provide appropriate Board oversight to it as much as to agency's performance of its service mission.**
  - **Board engagement in and approval of priority areas for community development and/or advocacy and participation in setting benchmarks for achievement of goals/objectives in these areas also. Important consideration is any opportunity for joining in collective advocacy of coalitions/networks, etc.**
  - **Clear definition of allowable extent and limits of Board member's active participation in any community development or advocacy initiatives.**
- 



**Peter Clutterbuck, MBA**  
**Community Planning Consultant**  
**Social Planning Network of Ontario**

**[www.spno.ca](http://www.spno.ca)**

**Telephone - (416) 653-7947**

**E-mail - [pclutterbuck@spno.ca](mailto:pclutterbuck@spno.ca)**

