

## **Smiling Land Foundation Makes “Rockin’ Big Give” to Two St. John’s-based Charities**

**Expatriate Newfoundlanders continue to make major contributions to their home province with \$150,000 in donations for the second year in a row**

**March 25, 2010 (St. John’s)** – Paul Sparkes, founding member and chairman of the board of the Smiling Land Foundation, along with board members Jennifer Bishop and Chris Henley, presented cheques in the amount of \$75,000 each to two local charities on March 25. Stella Burry Foundation and the Vera Perlin Society were each the beneficiaries of the enormous generosity of this Toronto-based Foundation which has donated \$300,000 to charitable causes in Newfoundland and Labrador since its inception in 2008.

The Smiling Land Foundation was established in the fall of 2008 by a group of passionate expatriate Newfoundland and Labradoreans who have each gone on to achieve successful careers in the broadcasting, legal, financial and entertainment fields in mainland Canada. Each attributes their success to their Newfoundland roots, motivating their desire to give back to their home province. In addition to Paul Sparkes, who is Executive Vice President of Corporate Affairs, CTVglobemedia, Jennifer Bishop, partner in law firm Miller Thomson LLP, and Chris Henley, founder and President of Henley Capital Corporation, the Foundation’s board also includes Seamus O’Regan, co-host of CTV’s Canada AM, and Tim Powers, Vice-President of Summa Communications, an Ottawa-based strategic communications firm. The Smiling Land Foundation board is supported by a strong advisory committee consisting of Alan Doyle, well known front man for Great Big Sea, Allan Hawco, actor, writer, and Executive Producer and lead in the highly popular and successful series “The Republic of Doyle”, and Kevin Casey, co-owner and ‘Chief Idea Officer’ of The Idea Factory.

Each year the Foundation holds an enormous ‘kitchen party’ entitled the “Rockin’ Big Give” in the historic Masonic Temple in downtown Toronto with an unforgettable concert and reception bringing out Newfoundlanders living away as well as those who have come to know our reputation for having a good time. This past year, the event featured well known Newfoundland bands Shanneygannock and The Fables. Several hundred patrons were in attendance to enjoy great food and music with the two very popular musical groups.

Speaking for the Foundation Sparkes noted, “We are so delighted to be able to give back to our home province this year through these two very important charitable organizations. The enthusiasm for our annual celebration of Newfoundland culture is enormous and we are thrilled to have the opportunity to raise funds of this magnitude to enable charities here in Newfoundland and make a difference in the lives of others.”

Tom Williams, Chair of the Stella Burry Foundation noted that the donation will have a major impact on the organization's programming for the coming year. The Stella Burry Foundation and its parent organization Stella Burry Community Services provide residential counselling, affordable housing development and employment programs and social enterprise to support and improve the lives of some of this province's most disadvantaged citizens. "The impact of a gift of this magnitude is enormous and will permit us to make some very significant additions to our programs", notes Williams. "We will be using these funds to enable us to pursue some new markets for our social enterprise initiatives," he added.

The Vera Perlin Society is also a beneficiary of the Smiling Land Foundation's generosity this year. For over 50 years, the organization has provided programs for children and adult with developmental disabilities, including career development, employment programming, community living and administration programs. Chair Thelma Williams indicated that funds will be used to renovate existing facilities and provide much-needed programming space. "The gift from the Smiling Land Foundation is a tremendous contribution to Phase I of our project – a \$2.5 million renovation and extension of the Perlin Centre and more importantly will ensure that this program will continue to exist well into the future providing the necessary programs for persons with developmental disabilities."

The cheque presentations to both organizations took place in Stella Burry Community Services newest building at 84 Prescott Street at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Members of both charities, including participants of programs which will benefit from these significant donations, were on hand to receive cheques from Sparkes, Bishop and Henley in a brief ceremony followed by light refreshments.

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For more information, contact

**For Stella Burry Community Services:**

Deborah Glassman  
Director Fund Development & Communications  
709.738.8391  
d.glassman@stellaburry.ca

**For Vera Perlin Society:**

Roger Downer  
Executive Director  
709.739.6017  
vps-oakley@nf.aibn.com

**For Smiling Land Foundation:**

Matthew Garrow  
Director, Corporate Affairs  
CTVglobemedia  
416.859.5641  
matthew.garrow@ctv.ca