

## [The Do-Gooders: B Corps and Beer](#)

### **A match made in heaven (or at least your local church)...**

Susan MacVittie November 16, 2017



Upstreet Craft Brewing partners, from left to right, Mitch Cobb, Joey Seaman and Mike Hogan, raise a glass. | Photo courtesy of the Guardian PEI

Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy. And in Prince Edward Island, beer is truly a blessed thing.

When Upstreet Craft Brewing was approached by St. Paul's Anglican Church to collaborate on a fundraising initiative for the church's 250th Anniversary, it was a match made in heaven. "The Archdeacon told us the story of Reverend Desbrisay, who was the third rector of St. Paul's parish in Charlottetown," explains Upstreet co-founder Mike Hogie.

In 1777, Reverend Theophilus Desbrisay was en route across the Atlantic to PEI to meet his congregation, but was captured by pirates or American privateers near Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and held prisoner until he could convince them he was a clergyman. When Desbrisay arrived in PEI, there was no building for the parish congregation to meet in, so they often met in what they called taverns. "We got to work finding a recipe for a beer that would reflect the times Desbrisay lived in, and we settled on an old English-style stock ale," says Hogie. "The Archdeacon even came in and blessed the kettle and the tank."

**How can beer make a difference?**

On a Sunday last September, Archdeacon John Clarke, parishioners, and beer enthusiasts gathered at Upstreet Brewing to celebrate the launch of a limited batch of 7,000 bottles of Red Stone Stock Ale. Ten cents from each bottle sold will go to St. Paul's church to help with outreach programs.

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Hogie explains the collaboration with St Paul's is just one way the brewery fulfils its mandate to support the community. In the two short years since they've opened their doors, Upstreet has donated close to \$30,000 to community groups and local artists. Part of that money has come from one of their first beers that they continue to brew called the Do Gooder. Like Red Stone, a percentage of sales from every bottle is donated to local artist and community groups in Charlottetown.

## **Certified B(enefit) Corporations**

In the early stages of their business plan, Hogie and co-founder, Mitch Cobb, knew they wanted to support and help revive the Charlottetown community and create viable employment. During their research they discovered B Corp Certification – a certification process where businesses have to meet set standards of overall social and environmental performance and accountability, and use the power of business to help solve social and environmental problems. B Corp also acts as a network for B Corp members, gives a unified voice for a diverse marketplace and acts as a measuring stick for consumers – similar to LEED for building or Fair Trade for coffee.

There are more than 2,000 Certified B Corporations in over 130 industries and 50 countries with one unifying goal – to redefine what success is in business. In Canada, there are over 150 Certified B Corps, making it the second largest B Corp community in the world.

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Upstreet Brewing has the distinction of being the first business in PEI to be a Certified B Corporation, one they proudly display with a B Corp plaque in the front foyer of the brewery. “We saw other breweries, like Beau's in Ontario and Picaroon in New Brunswick that were B Corp certified and knew it was possible. What we were doing lined up pretty well with the values that they were looking for.”

To become a Certified B Corporation a company must meet requirements by completing an impact assessment. The assessment asks questions about governance, workers, community and the environment. After the assessment a business must meet the legal requirement by adopting the Corporation Legal Framework and sign a term sheet and Declaration of Interdependence.

## **Why bother?**

“Part of our mission is to create a new way of doing business,” says Mikey Wasnidge, Upstreet Brewing Marketing and Events Manager. “The certification process was a great way to get the team together to look at how we could meet the standards. Being certified also gives us added accountability. We were incorporating things like buying local ingredients, gender parity and collaborative efforts into the business and now we have it in writing. There are a lot of businesses that work just as hard as we do and they just need to look into it. We are happy to talk to anyone who wants to know about it. With B Corp Certification people see us making efforts and it creates goodwill within the community. People want to support sustainable businesses.”

Yet, if capitalism is built on maximizing profits for shareholders, how can sustainable business ever make a broad scale change?

## **The evolution of capitalism**

Using business as a tool for social change isn't new, and the idea that corporations should be focused only on profit maximization is being called into question more and more. Both national and international institutions have expressed the need for a different role of business in society. The European Union, for instance, considers corporate social responsibility one of the key instruments to achieve the EU's 2020 objectives of a sustainable and inclusive economy.

In 2014 the Canadian Bar Association recommended that Parliament change the federal statute under which businesses are established "to make it clear that corporations can pursue public benefit purposes beyond pure profit."

Advocates for a new stakeholder capitalism believe value for both the stakeholder and society is possible, but standards matter. Consumers, investors and policymakers need certification to measure transparency and to provide an infrastructure to help businesses grow.

There is no legislative recognition of B Corps in Canada but in 2014 the Canadian Bar Association recommended that Parliament change the federal statute under which businesses are established "to make it clear that corporations can pursue public benefit purposes beyond pure profit."

For now, B Corp membership continues to grow and members like Upstreet's Cobb meet at conferences, such as the one he attended in October in Toronto, to network and discuss how to collaborate with other movements fighting for social, environmental and economic justice.

It's a movement to raise a glass to.