



Equality for Newfoundland and Labrador Women

A BRIEF SUBMITTED BY

**Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women
Newfoundland and Labrador**

TO THE HONOURABLE TOM MARSHALL
MINISTER OF FINANCE

AT THE 2008 BUDGET CONSULTATIONS
January 21, 2008
ST. JOHN'S, NL

About the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Newfoundland & Labrador

- What** The mandate of the Advisory Council is to advise the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and bring before Government and the public the social, economic, political, legal and cultural matters relating to advancing the status of women in the province. The Advisory Council is an arms-length, independent organization which draws its information, analysis and strategies from provincial equality-seeking feminist organizations, individual women, and other organizations that work to advance women's equality.
- Who** The 11-member Advisory Council is appointed for three-year terms by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Appointments reflect the regional representation of women with diverse backgrounds. All Members are eligible for reappointment. The President / CEO position is salaried and filled through an open competition. Council Members, other than the President / CEO, are selected through an open nomination process. Criteria for selection include demonstrated leadership in working to advance the status of women and the ability to work on women's equality and equity-seeking issues from a community, regional or provincial perspective. Advisory Council Staff maintain a consistent presence on issues of women's equality and inclusion, and conduct the day to day work of the Council.
- Why** The Advisory Council recognizes that women's equality and inclusion are essential to the decision making which guides the direction of our organizations, communities and province. However, women are still not equal in our society and, despite the advances of recent decades, violence and gender discrimination are pervasive. The Advisory Council uses its strong connection to women's groups to provide information and analysis to Government about the differing impacts of programs, policies, services and legislation on women, families and communities.
- When** The Advisory Council was established in 1980 by the Government of the day and received legislative standing with the introduction of the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act*. Throughout its history, Council Members and Staff have worked with Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, and interested Members of the House of Assembly from all political parties to advance the status of women throughout the province.
- How** The Advisory Council advises, advocates, lobbies and educates on issues affecting the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. This work is accomplished by using the information and analysis of the Council, the skills of Staff and the sharing of strategies with other women's equality organizations. The Advisory Council uses feminist process and practice both within the framework of Council meetings and its team approach to Staff work.
- Where** The Advisory Council office is located in St. John's, NL. Staff and Council members are accessible by phone, fax and email, and are available to meet with community and government representatives.

Summary of 2008 Budget Recommendations

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women respectfully submits the following recommendations for Government consideration in preparing Budget 2008:

Recommendation 1: Newfoundland & Labrador Sexual Health Centre

- Increase funding to the Newfoundland & Labrador Sexual Health Centre to a minimum of \$100,000 in Budget 2008.

Recommendation 2: Annually Funded Women's Organizations

- Provide increased funding to currently funded women's groups, including the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres, Transition Houses, Shelters and Safe Houses, the NL Transition Centre Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.

Recommendation 3: New Funding to Women's Organizations

- Strategically invest in the equality-seeking work of the Multicultural Women's Organization of NL and Aboriginal women's groups.
- Expand the level of funding available to new & emerging equality-seeking women's organizations.

Recommendation 4: Gender Inclusive Analysis

- Allocate resources for a designated, full-time Gender Equity Policy Advisor and student intern for each provincial department and agency.
- Commit to filling these new positions during the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

Recommendation 5: Justice Services

- Increase provincial funding for civil legal aid and target new funds to positions specifically designated for family law matters.
- Restore full services for pursuing child support applications through the court to members of the general public.

Recommendation 6: Child Care and Early Learning

- Increase funding for child care and early learning programs targeted to improved wages and benefits and the creation of new spaces.
- Increase child care subsidies for families who do not have access to publicly funded regulated child care.
- Continue to lobby the Federal Government for a comprehensive publicly funded Child Care and Early Learning Program.

Recommendation 7: Healthy Baby Clubs

- Expand funding for Healthy Baby Clubs throughout the province.
- Increase funding for existing Clubs to ensure women do not have to wait to receive this service.

Recommendation 8: Minimum Wage

- Increase the minimum wage to \$10 per hour by October 2009, with a scheduled increase annually to reflect either the increase in cost of living or the annual average wage increase, whichever is higher.

Recommendation 9: Women's Employment Supports and Training

- Increase funding for a range of programs and support which provide women with opportunities to develop employment skills and become employed.

Recommendation 10: Home Support Wages & Benefits

- Provide increased funding for home support wages & benefits.
- Develop a mechanism to provide Workers' Compensation Benefits to all home support workers and allocate the required resources to cover the associated costs.

Recommendation 11: Income Support Rates

- Increase income support rates in all categories, with a significant increase for single people regardless of their living situation.

Recommendation 12: Dental Care

- Expand coverage to include preventative care and the full cost of dentures, including repairs, to clients receiving income support.

Recommendation 13: Labrador Income Support Allowance

- Provide the Labrador Allowance to all clients receiving income support in Labrador.

Recommendation 14: Income Support Home Owner Grant

- Provide a \$50 per month home maintenance grant to clients receiving income support who live in their own homes.

Recommendation 15: Back to School Grant

- Provide an annual non-taxable \$100 grant per child to families receiving the National Child Benefit to offset costs associated with school supplies and clothes.

Recommendation 16: Supportive Housing

- Increase the funding available for supportive housing programs and services throughout the province.
- Increase the level of funding provided to currently funded supportive housing programs.
- Provide additional resources to ensure government departments are able to provide a collaborative, comprehensive and timely response to the needs of individual clients and agencies delivering supportive housing programs.
- Develop processes which hold departments accountable for providing a collaborative, comprehensive and timely response to individuals and agencies.

Recommendation 17: Rent Supplement Program

- Increase the budget for the Newfoundland and Labrador Rent Supplement Program as a means of creating more affordable and accessible housing throughout the province.

Recommendation 18: Home Heating

- Increase the amount of the home heating subsidy.
- Remove the provincial tax on home heating fuel and electricity.

Recommendation 19: Prescription Drug Coverage

- Simplify the application process and provide more options for completing the application; and decrease the approval time.
- Actively promote the program throughout the province using all means possible.
- Access Plan: increase the earning threshold for qualifying and decrease the percentage of co-pay for the consumer.
- Assurance Plan: decrease the cap on the percentage of net family income required to qualify for the program.

Recommendation 20: Provincial Student Loan Program

- Reduce the interest charged on the Provincial Student Loans to below prime.

Recommendation 21: Poverty Reduction Strategy

- Provide the funding required to ensure government is able to communicate and consult effectively and regularly with community groups on an ongoing basis.
- Provide additional funding to increase the capacity of government to engage in research and analysis related to the development and monitoring of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Recommendation 22: Family-Friendly Treasury Board Guidelines

- Authorize Treasury Board to include the reimbursement of family care in its guidelines for compensating volunteers and allocate the necessary resources to cover these costs.