

**Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
2000-2001 Annual Report**

II Letter of Transmittal

November 20, 2001

Honorable Sandra Kelly
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
PO Box 8700
St. John s, NF
A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Kelly,

On behalf of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women I am pleased to present you with our organization s Annual Report covering the period April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2001.

This report covers a period when the

Advisory Council undertook the coordination of a pan-provincial conference to enable our organization to broaden connections to individual women and women s groups in many communities and regions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The Auditor General s Report covering the same period is also included.

Respectfully,

Joyce M. Hancock
President

III What is the Advisory Council?

The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women is an arms-length organization set up in 1980 by the government of the day. It exists to provide advice to government on issues of women s social and economic equality. The Council consists of a President, Vice President and nine other members who are all appointed by Cabinet for a three-year term.

Advisory Council Philosophy

The Provincial Advisory Council attempts to work through feminist process and practice both within the framework of board meetings and by using a team approach to staff work. This is accomplished through validation, shared decision making and constantly working toward the creation of a woman-centered environment.

What does the Advisory Council do?

The Provincial Advisory Council was established as a body for consultation, research and advising government on matters relating to the status of women. The Advisory Council was reorganized in 1996 to include members nominated by seven Status of Women Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador. This provides feminist groups with a direct link to the Provincial Advisory Council to ensure that regional issues affecting women are brought to the attention of Government Ministers.

The Provincial Advisory Council works in the areas of advocacy, lobbying and education on issues that affect women's social/economic equality and inclusion. We do this by using the skills of our staff, board and other equality seeking organizations with whom we share a common agenda for women's full participation and integration.

How the Advisory Council Works

Lobby / Advocacy

Throughout the year the President of the Advisory Council meets with Ministers, Members of the House of Assembly and senior bureaucrats to advocate and advise on matters of gender equality and inclusion. The Council Board meets quarterly, and during these meetings issues needing advocacy are brought forward and strategies for advancing gender equality are developed. A portion of our quarterly meeting is spent with the Status of Women Minister and the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Women's Policy Office to advise them of the concerns of women brought forward from Advisory Council board members who work and live in many regions throughout the province.

Media

Often the Advisory Council has to challenge a government direction which we consider not inclusive of women. This is a difficult balancing act as women throughout our province expect the Council to provide a strong position and critique in favor of gender inclusion. Yet, much of the President's time is spent in dialogue and discussion to advance women's equality within government departments and agencies.

Communications

The Community Liaison/Communications Director is available to assist women's groups in accessing information, as well as to link groups in the province working on similar equity/equality issues. The

Council facilitates a number of conference calls with Women's Councils and other community groups working on equality issues. These sessions often provide a basis for a lobby, project proposal or planning meetings with government departments to bring a women centered perspective to community and provincial issues.

Community Development/Outreach

The Advisory Council is frequently invited to provide input and share its expertise and gender analysis with a variety of women's groups and community organizations. Advisory Council staff are involved in a number of initiatives which include consultation, advocacy, facilitation and critique of existing government policy, protocol and practice. The Council President is often invited to speak or facilitate sessions in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Publications and Writings

The Advisory Council has a mandate

to educate the public on matters of concern to women's equality. Although we do not have a researcher on staff, we continue to produce briefs and submissions by using the skills of staff and by generating the development of feminist analysis with others from the women's community with whom we share a common agenda for women's equality and inclusion.

We maintain a library that is frequently used by students who are researching and writing school and university papers on women's issues. In addition, we publish a news bulletin which is sent to more than six hundred women and women's groups throughout the province and country.

IV Council Members

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is made up of eleven members appointed for a three-year term. The majority of our present board were appointed in November of 1999 and the remainder early in the year 2000.

The President of the Advisory Council acts as the Chief Executive Officer and is employed full time to coordinate the day-to-day work of the organization. This work includes providing direction to staff, chairing board meetings and meeting with decision makers within government bureaucracy and community agencies.

The present board of the Advisory Council is made up of women representing a broad cross-section of the province's geography and experience. Three of our members are from Labrador, seven were nominated from equality-seeking feminist organizations and all are actively involved with Women's Councils or Shelters within their regions. This board consists of women who work in public service, including health, education, community development, business and academia. This diversity of education and experience provides the Advisory Council with the ability to understand the state of

women s equality through many experiences and dimensions.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women for the 2000-2001 year:

Joyce M. Hancock, President, Stephenville

Susan Hollett, Vice President and Finance Chair, Shoal Harbor

Geri Devereaux, Personnel Chair, Rodgers Cove

Michelle Skinner, Bay St. George

Shirley Squires, Wabush

Valerie Anderson, Happy Valley-Goose Bay

Frances Murphy, Nain

Phyllis Artiss, St. John s

Michelle House, Corner Brook

Dorothy Fewer, Grand Falls-Windsor

V Council Staff

Maintaining a provincial organization and fulfilling a provincial mandate is a difficult task. In 1996 the Council lost two staff positions and more than \$100,000 from its budget. One of the ways this Council has been sustaining itself is through forming Ad Hoc Committees with women s equality groups and acquiring project dollars. Although we have been able to keep a strong presence because of our projects there is an ethical dilemma presented when women s groups throughout this province are feeling that they have to compete with the Provincial Advisory Council for the same monies. It is through the strong commitment of our core staff and the support of feminist organizations throughout this province that this Advisory Council has been able to maintain its presence and work on behalf of women and women s organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Provincial Advisory Council Staff for the 2000-2001 year:

Joyce M. Hancock, President and CEO

Melanie Parsons, Secretary/Bookkeeper

Joyce Aylward, Community Liaison/ Communications Director (April 1- October15)

Mary Clarke, Acting Community Liaison/ Communications Director (December - March)

Kathy Dunderdale, Provincial Conference Coordinator (March - December)

VI Council Work

Although the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established as a body for consultation, research and advising government on matters relating to the status of women, this year was primarily focused on consultation. Early in the term of the new board (January 2000) we met with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Honorable Julie Bettney, to discuss the need to spend time with women whose lives and experience were not always reflected in the everyday work of the Advisory Council. With our limited resourcing since 1996 the presence of the Council outside St. John's was clearly restricted and board members felt that if we were to speak about women's reality in the context of Newfoundland and Labrador then we should be present to hear from women where they lived and worked.

The Advisory Council Board decided to direct the work of the Council President and staff during 2000 to reaching women in as many communities and regions of our province as possible. We were able to acquire funding from the provincial government and the federal government through the Status of Women Canada Women's Program.

From March to September more than seven hundred women participated in community forums. In October four hundred and fifty-eight women from seventy-eight communities (sixty women from Labrador) attended a pan-provincial conference Exploring Common Ground. More than five hundred women participated in the Provincial World March of Women and three hundred women attended the November 29th Anniversary Gala celebrating the twenty years of activity of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. All of these activities were organized and coordinated by the Board and Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

In addition to the work of consulting and organizing, the Council was able to fulfill its role in the areas of lobbying/advocacy/advising, community involvement, presentation, media, and facilitation, as well as advocacy/crisis/referral. The following pages provide an overview of the Provincial Advisory Council's work through the year ending March 31, 2001.

VII Council Meetings

A two-day meeting of the Advisory Council is held quarterly. The 82nd meeting of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women was held in Gander, following which each of the Council's board members took on roles as coordinators, facilitators and presenters at the Provincial Women's Conference 2000, Exploring Common Ground.

June 15 16, 2000, St. John s

October 6,7,8, 2000, Gander

November 30/December 1, 2000, St. John s

March 15 16, 2001, St. John s

The board of the Advisory Council meets face to face four times each year. However, board members make themselves available for consultation with the President between meetings. The Vice President works with the Council Secretary/Bookkeeper to oversee the financial reporting. The member from Rodgers Cove acts as the Personnel Committee Chair and the St. John s member is a signing officer, works on personnel issues and, along with the President, provides a board presence for activities based in St. John s.

In this year with our concentrated efforts toward outreach and coordinating a pan-provincial conference, members of the Advisory Council board were available for conference calls, attending community forums, and acting as an ongoing reference committee to the President and Provincial Conference Coordinator as we strategized to include women-focused outreach activities.

The President and Staff of the Council provide quarterly activity reports to the board. This allows board members to have comprehensive knowledge of the day-to-day activities undertaken by the women who work for and with the Council. The Board discusses strategies during face-to-face meetings and provides direction to the President and Staff between meetings.

From time to time, to increase our knowledge and analysis of equality/equity issues, the board meets with women who have information and ongoing strategies on particular equality issues. These guests at our meetings provide an overview; Council members and staff provide feedback as to how these issues impact women in different regions of our province. Some of the women who met with the Advisory Council board during this period included:

Dorothy Inglis, Member of the Council of Canadians ~ Dorothy came to discuss the cuts to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and the effect on Newfoundland and Labrador programs, (e.g., Here and Now).

Trudy Richardson, Training officer with the Alberta Nurses Union ~ Trudy identified provincial concerns with the move toward privatization of Canada s health care system and the deterioration in the role of nurses and formal health care providers.

Allison Earle and Becky Roome, Assistant Deputy Ministers within Human Resources and Employment ~ These women came to address the redesign of the income support program and the restructuring of this department to include training and employment.

Mary Ennis and Leslie Macleod, Consumer Organization of Persons With Disabilities (COD) ~ These women came to present concerns from the perspective of some disability groups on the sentencing of

Robert Latimer, who had been charged with murdering his disabled daughter Tracey.

Frances Ennis, Health Canada ~ She is presently involved with evaluating the work and involvements of the Family Resource Centres throughout the province.

Kathy Dunderdale, Worked with the Advisory Council as the Community Liaison/Communications Director and the Provincial Conference Coordinator, provided input at a meeting with the new Status of Women Minister as to the resourcing needs of the Provincial Advisory Council.

Lana Payne, Researcher with the Fish Food and Allied Workers (FFAW), presented information on the gender issues implicit in the Employment Insurance program.

Ed Hayden, Provided information on the progress and involvements of the Strategic Social Plan.

VIII Lobby / Advocacy / Advising

It has always been the mandate of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women to advise government on issues of gender equality and inclusion. Because of the limited resources of this organization, we have had to be creative in our approach to this work. Since 1996, the Status of Women Minister, Julie Bettney, has been providing opportunities for the Advisory Council, local women's groups and others concerned with equality and equity opportunities to meet with her and other Cabinet colleagues to better inform them of women's concerns and experiences. This process has moved ahead and now our Council President is able to meet with Cabinet Ministers and senior bureaucrats without the direct intervention of the Minister. We view this as a healthy sign of respect for the critique and challenge provided by this arms length body which draws its information and analysis from the broader women's community throughout the province.

Now that the Advisory Council has a new Minister Responsible for the Status of Women we are hoping that this progressive/proactive approach to meeting with elected officials will continue. It is important to recognize, however, that relationships with governments are tenuous and challenging and the expertise from the women's community will often be at odds with the agenda of governments. As the Council involves itself in the activities of lobbying, advocating, and advising we must continue to be mindful of our arms-length status and that our information, analysis and strategies must be drawn from the women who live and work in this province. In addition to the overt role the President plays in lobbying and advising, she is also a member of the Premier's Council on Social Policy Development, having served in this role since the Strategic Social Plan consultation of 1996.

The following represents some of the issues brought to the attention of government by the Advisory

Council in the past year:

- The Advisory Council met with federal Human Resources and Development Canada Minister, Jane Stewart. We raised concerns about the negative impact the Employment Insurance eligibility criteria requirements are having on women in the province. We stressed the need for increased money and broader eligibility criteria for women accessing training in trades and technology and bridging programs. The HRDC Minister was also informed that the limited maternity EI benefits will keep many women in this province from taking advantage of the extended benefit period.
- The Advisory Council requested that the federal Minister do a gender-inclusive analysis of HRDC programs and the EI program to ensure that women and seasonal workers in Atlantic Canada are benefitting adequately.
- The Advisory Council is concerned that the federal Divorce Act will not consider the recommendations put forward by women on the issue of custody and access.
- The Advisory Council challenged the acclaimed leader of the Progressive Conservative opposition leader on his plan for gender inclusion and social and economic integrated policy development.
- The Advisory Council brought forward concerns around the abuse of a partner not being considered when access to children is granted by judges.
- The Advisory Council is concerned with the lack of advocacy/services for children who are involved with court processes.
- The Advisory Council brought forward the need for support from the Finance Minister to provide training dollars for women who wish to pursue trades and technology courses.
- The future composition of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women may be jeopardized unless all new members are drawn from the active feminist community.
- The Advisory Council is concerned that the furniture budget for for families living on income support is inadequate.
- The Advisory Council is concerned that the training of Client Service Officers within the Human Resources and Employment department needs to be reexamined and improved.
- The Council is concerned with the two lines of business of Human Resources and Employment (income support and training/employment). This business approach to the social needs of people, is causing increased difficulties for clients on income support.
- The Advisory Council challenged the new leader of the Liberal government to pursue the integration of social and economic policy decision making initiated by the former administration.
- The Advisory Council met with the new lead Minister for the Strategic Social Plan and expressed concerns that the Strategic Social Plan values of prevention and early intervention do not appear apparent in the redesigning of Human Resources and Employment.
- The Advisory Council Challenged three candidates in the Liberal leadership race on their plans for social and economic policy inclusion and integration.
- The Advisory Council is concerned that the use of Conditional Sentencing in cases of abuse and violence is often inappropriate. Women feel that this serves to decriminalize abuse of women and children.

- The Advisory Council brought forward concerns with the lack of programs for offenders and services to victims, especially in rural and remote regions.
- The work of the Provincial Advisory Council is under-resourced and Board members challenged the Premier, Finance Minister and Status of Women Minister on this matter.
- The Advisory Council heard the numerous concerns of Aboriginal women from Labrador communities, including suicide, inadequate housing, violence, lack of police presence and substance abuse. Women continue to remind the Advisory Council that these issues are extraordinary because of geography, isolation, racism and language.
- The Advisory Council is worried with the extraordinarily long court delays experienced by women who have to seek redress through our provincial and family courts.
- The Advisory Council heard from women who feel they lack good legal representation when using legal aid lawyers.
- The Advisory Council is hearing urgent concerns regarding the low wages and absence of benefits for home care providers.
- The Advisory Council is concerned with the continued incarceration of women at the Clarenville Correctional Centre where there is inadequate psychiatric care.
- The Advisory Council raised concerns with the lack of privacy and confidentiality in dealing with Justice, Income Support and Child Protection systems.
- The Advisory Council heard from women who were forced to limit mobility following court orders on custody and access after divorce.
- The Advisory Council raised the need for education and training for Legal Aid lawyers and Provincial Court judges to understand the dynamics of abusive relationships.
- The Advisory Council raised concerns with the lack of consequences for breaching conditions of peace bonds and restraining orders.
- The Advisory Council supported the need for increased funding for the service delivery work at Women's Councils/Centres.
- The Advisory Council raised the issue of a lack of consequences for men who violate custody and access orders or fail to pay court ordered support.
- The Advisory Council challenged the Department of Education to ensure that violence and bullying programs are integrated into school curriculum. Community groups and anti-violence coalitions are currently filling in these gaps by providing workshops on these issues.
- The Advisory Council raised concerns about the terrible housing situation, especially in St. John's. Women are forced to choose between poverty and violence when they wish to leave abusive relationships.
- The Advisory Council lobbied for adequate resources for the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre and the Provincial Association Against Family Violence.
- The Advisory Council raised the need for a formal review of Unified Family Court to determine if the process is working for women and children.
- The Advisory Council raised the need for more housing options for women leaving abusive relationships. Housing should be adequate, appropriate and affordable.

- The Advisory Council met with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Chief to express concerns with the place of community policing in the restructuring and new leadership within the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

IX Community Development / Consultation Activity / Outreach

The Provincial Advisory Council is asked to provide feminist analysis and facilitation to both community organizations and government agencies and departments. The President and Community Liaison/Communications Director are able to be present in this role both in St. John's and in some rural regions of our province. At times the Advisory Council initiates consultation, (i.e. conference call with Justice Minister June 2000), and at other times we participate along with other community groups in providing information relevant to women's experiences.

- Vancouver Roundtable on Custody and Access ~ This three-day session brought together women from all provinces and territories who have been working on issues of custody and access. There are real concerns surfacing that changes in the federal Divorce Act will not be positive for women in contested cases of custody and access.
 - December 6th Vigil ~ The Provincial Advisory Council dedicated a piece of our work at the event marking the Montreal Massacre of 1989.
 - Women In Resource Development Committee (WRDC) ~ The Council President Co-chairs this organization. Presently WRDC has commenced or provided six Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT) courses (bridging programs for women who are interested in working in the resource-based industry). This organization is preparing to submit a Phase II of the Untapped Resource.
 - Twentieth Anniversary Celebration ~ In this year the Advisory Council undertook to publicly celebrate the work and accomplishments of an organization which has worked on issues of social and economic equality for twenty years. A gala evening was attended by some three hundred women, a new logo was developed by a local graphic artist Sheila Boone, new letterhead was developed and a booklet of writings by twelve women was edited and distributed to more than one thousand women throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.
 - Women Interested In Successful Employment (WISE) ~ The Community Liaison/Communications Director sits on the Board of Directors of this organization, which provides training and support to women entering or re-entering the workforce.
 - Ism's Project ~ The Advisory Council Community Liaison/Communications Director participated in a reference committee to the project coordinated by the Women's Policy Office. This project was attempting to address the systemic issues of racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, heterosexism and the impact of discrimination on relationships and society.

- Provincial Coordinating Committee of the Violence Prevention Initiative ~ The Community Liaison/Communications Director with the Provincial Advisory Council acted as Co-chair of the Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence (RCCAV), as well as representing the RCCAV on the Provincial Coordinating Committee.
- Video Project ~ A video of Women s Reflections commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre was edited and distributed to women s groups throughout the province.
- Examples of additional involvements:
 - Justice Issues Sub-committee ~ This committee began with the Provincial Strategy Against Violence and continues under the Violence Prevention Initiative.
 - Reference Committee on Heterosexism Bias in Government policies and protocols.
 - Presentations to students at Memorial University School of Social Work, Sociology, Women s Studies, as well as presentations to students at the College of the North Atlantic, Lawrence College and senior high students in various schools in the St. John s metropolitan area.
 - Working group on women s participation in trades and technical training.
 - Meetings with inmates at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women.
 - Atlantic Coalition of Violence Against Girls and Women in rural and remote regions.
 - Sub committees of Premier s Council, Social Audit Voluntary Sector on Jobs and Growth, a Social Inclusion Project.

X Communication and Writing

The Advisory Council recognizes that one of its most important pieces of work is communication. Women s Councils, Transition Houses and Shelters, anti-violence coalitions, women s union committees and groups working on equality issues look to the Council to assist with the provision of information and the development of gender inclusive critique of longstanding and ongoing issues. The Council coordinates conference calls, and communicates daily with groups throughout the province. Using electronic mail, telephone, fax and regular mail we are both proactive and reactive in responding to women s needs individually and organizationally.

During this period we have written, compiled and/or coordinated the following pieces of work:

- Internal reports for board President, Community Liaison/Communications Director, Secretary/Bookkeeper, media, advocacy/crisis (twenty total).
- News bulletin focusing on federal elections, Provincial Women s Conference and World March of Women.
- News bulletin focusing on International Women s Day 2000 and the origins of this day celebrating women.
- Exploring Common Ground Provincial Women s Conference 2000. This includes a conference agenda as well as a description/profile of equality-seeking organizations throughout our province.
- 1999-2000 Annual Report of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Final Reports from women s community forums and Provincial Women s Conference 2000. This report includes the key recommendations from women who were involved in some aspect of the Council s work in 2000.
- Women Speak, a compilation of twelve writings from women who have been involved in feminist activism throughout the past twenty years. This was a project celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Minutes of quarterly meetings of the Advisory Council.
- Four media releases and one CBC commentary, Where are the women...Where are the values.
- Keynote address for International Women s Day, Port Aux Basques, Provincial Women s Conference and Twentieth Anniversary Celebration.
- Facilitation and reports from forty community forums.
- Women's Conference 2000. This includes a conference agenda as well as a description/provile of equality-seeking organizations throughout our province.
- Coordination and chairing of fifteen conference calls with women s groups involved with the Provincial Women s Conference.
- Our Secretary and Community Liaison/Communications Director continue to update our communication system, add information to our web site and respond to women s groups needing assistance accessing information sources. The Advisory Council is able to provide background and analysis on numerous equality/equity issues.

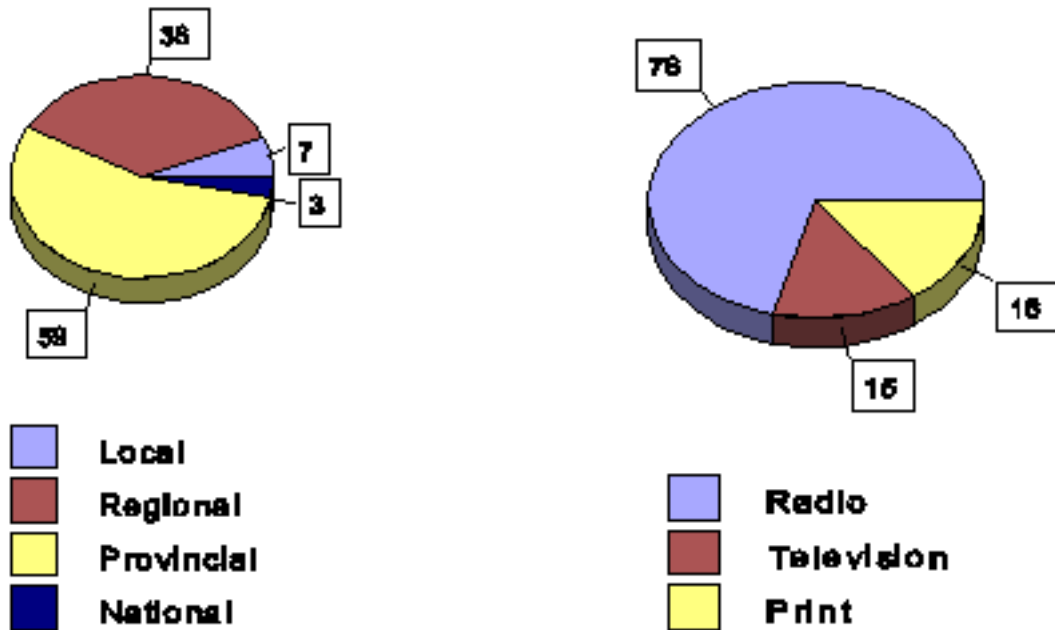
XI Media

A key role of the Advisory Council is public education. With the limited resources of the organization the media is one of the vehicles useful in putting forward a feminist message. There is little necessity for proactive work as the Council President is continuously called to react and respond to issues.

Requests for media interviews occur weekly and it is not an unusual occurrence to have reporters seeking both interviews and referrals to provide a more rural perspective on an issue affecting women and families. The Council President has written commentaries for CBC provincially and nationally, has been an invited guest on three occasions on phone-in radio shows, and has responded as a panelist to provincial issues on both radio and television.

Our office continues to collect data on both the issues and the time provided for consultation and referral. There were a total of 107 interviews during the 2000 - 2001 period. This includes radio, television and print and the Council's perspective has been covered by local, regional and national media.

Interview Coverage Interview Medium



Some examples of issues highlighted by the President's media interviews in the 2000 - 2001 period:

- International Women's Day 2000 and the beginning of provincial activities highlighting the World March of Women.
The Advisory Council response included relating the issues of global poverty and violence to the proliferation of food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Abuse of conditional sentencing options by provincial courts.
The Council's response challenged the notion that programs for sex offenders significantly decrease the risk of re-offending behavior. In addition, the Council President raised concerns about the downplaying of violence against women implicit in conditional sentences served in community.
- Announcement of funding to continue anti-violence work.
The Council was quick to express gratitude to government for responding with five year funding. Concerns with the need for continued coordination of government departmental involvements on violence issues was cited as an area of concern with government providing money to community based coalitions.

- Sexist remarks by Finance Minister
The Council responded by noting the link between sexism and abuse. The President noted that this issue was already highlighted in 1998 when the Premier demanded an apology from another Cabinet Minister. She noted that this was an example of how men in power disguise sexism as humor and cry political correctness when challenged.
- Provincial Budget, March 2000
Council noted the budget was strongly focused on health care, but raised concern that the poverty of living with inadequate income may be masked by our government's response to the health care system.
- Stay of Proceedings ~ Victim unable to testify in sexual abuse trial.
The Council noted the life long trauma of sexual abuse and violence and that victims often feel re-victimized by court processes where offenders received minimal sentencing.
- Provincial Women's Conference
The Advisory Council outlined the theme and relevance of this conference and the fact that women from many rural/remote communities of Newfoundland and Labrador will be attending.
- Provincial and Federal Justice Ministers discuss making breach of restraining order a criminal offense.
The Council responded by noting that this would bring about more respect for restraining orders as women who are noticing the light sentences are losing faith in the police and court as a response to violent offenders.
- The union representing correctional officers worried that escaped offender Richard Ryan is awaiting trial in Corner Brook and women's safety is a concern.
The Council's response reminded the union that they will not be used as a pawn between the NAPE union and Justice department. Policies and practice for temporary absence from prison is the real issue.
- Women in Newfoundland and Labrador will be given six months maternity leave with job guarantee.
The Council feels that provincial legislation should be in line with federal legislation. Too many women in this province cannot take advantage of maternity leave because they cannot afford to live on fifty percent of their wages.
- Brutal sexual assault of 16 year old.
Council responded by reminding the reporter that the offender chooses violence regardless of personal history. Bullying and anti-violence programs need to be an integrated part of school curriculum.
- Federal election.
The social and economic issues of concern to women are not high on the agenda of any federal party running in this election.
- Bar owners encouraging young women to engage in stripping.
The Council raised concerns with the responsibility of bar owners to vulnerable young women who make choices while inebriated.
- Child poverty and the federal election.
Council responded by noting that children are not poor in isolation from families and most notably mothers. The impoverished provincial systems of health, justice, education and income

support also contribute to poverty.

- Province extends parental benefits to one year bringing them in line with federal government. Council's response noted this as a good move which could be useful to parents with a high enough income who can afford to leave work and live on fifty percent of their income for a year.
- Low turnout for federal election. Many women and youth felt that this was an unnecessary election. The Council's response noted the state of democratic choice when a party forms government after destroying social programs and its closest competition is a party which believes that our country does not need strong social programs.
- Provincial Advisory Council unveils new logo. The Council noted the twentieth anniversary and the need for a bold description of women for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- The significance of December 6th. Council used this interview to remind readers/viewers that violence against women and children remains a pervasive problem in our province and country.
- Leadership for the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties. Council noted the need to hear from political leaders on their plan for integrated social/economic policy, as well as any plans for women in key roles of decision making.
- Should Liberal leadership use affirmative action plan? The Advisory Council responded that having women and youth in designated seats was done to ensure adequate gender participation. Women can and should be elected in general categories as well.
- Supreme Court Uphold Canada's Child Pornography Law with two major exceptions. The Advisory Council reminded listeners/viewers that there are new threats to children's safety which come through the internet. In addition, women are not convinced that everything created by artists has only artistic merit. This issue must be examined in light of our right to freedom of expression, and our knowledge of today's influences on children and youth.
- Life sentence of a man who stabbed a woman twenty-two times has been reduced because the judge had focused on extreme violence. The Advisory Council noted that this sends a wrong signal to abusers and society generally ~ courts minimizing abuse and violence. There are crimes for which a period of incarceration is entirely appropriate.
- Provincial Cabinet announced. The Advisory Council is pleased to once again see key roles for women in Health, Finance and Education, as well as an emphasis placed on aboriginal concerns.
- The New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women calls for resignation of the Status of Women Minister in that province. Council President spoke about the concerns she has heard from women in New Brunswick who fear that this province's arms-length Advisory Council may not be maintained.

XII Advocacy / Crisis / Referral

The Provincial Advisory Council's office in St. John's receives calls on a daily basis from women who are in need of individual advocacy and referral. These calls are taken by the Council's Secretary who is able to refer the individual to services. The issues range from a mental health crisis to workplace harassment. We have developed a list of appropriate services within the St. John's region, as well as connections in the more rural/remote regions. The more complex issues are dealt with by the Council President or Community Liaison who have backgrounds and education in social work and counseling. This work is time consuming and not actually within the mandate of the Council work. However, staff are committed to providing attentive listening, as well as appropriate referrals.

Many of the calls within the past year are focusing on the issues of injustice, violence, poverty and the changes within the departments of Human Resources and Employment and Health and Community Services which allow many people to fall through the cracks of the restructuring and redesign of these departments. In responding to women who call or visit our LeMarchant Road office, we consistently work from a personal empowerment model. All staff, students and volunteers at the Council office take the necessary time to listen, validate the experience and provide information and referral. There are insufficient services available and the Council is getting many calls in which women simply need to tell their story.

When we see a number of calls outlining similar concerns, and where there are government departmental protocols or practices interfering with access to services, the Council President brings this to the attention of a Cabinet Minister or senior departmental official. Examples of concerns brought to the attention of the Advisory Council during this period:

- A woman who called to discuss the poor service she is getting from a Legal Aid lawyer. She fears losing her children in a custody/access dispute because her lawyer is ill prepared in court.
- A young woman who was sexually assaulted and felt that health officials did not honor her request not to involve the police.
- A woman who was living in terrible housing but afraid to confront the landlord.
- A woman needing money to travel from a rural community to have an abortion.
- A young teenage girl needing to discuss her sexual orientation with a counselor outside her rural school/community.
- A woman who is badly treated when she goes to visit a Client Service Officer with the Department of Human Resources and Employment.
- An incarcerated woman who wants psychiatric services and cannot obtain them at the Clarenville Correctional Centre for Women.
- A woman unable to leave province to obtain employment because her Custody and Access

order provides bi-monthly access to her husband. He travels freely for employment and visits without giving her or his children notice.

Information/Crisis/Referral Calls 2000-2001

Health 32
Violence 61
Legal 51
Information/Referral 212

Total number of calls recorded: 378
Time commitment recorded: 87.9 hours

Provincial Women s Conference 2000 . . . Exploring Common Ground

The rationale for the Advisory Council spending nearly a year of outreach with women throughout the province was to better inform ourselves of the issues and concerns of women who had no formal connection to equality-seeking women s groups. In this, the twentieth anniversary of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, it was important to the Board to connect with women in a more direct way. To listen to the reality of women, families and communities. To question them as to their sense of the Advisory Council and what we should be doing as a legislated voice for women in Newfoundland and Labrador. To be present in communities and regions in a way that the limited resourcing of our organization does not permit in an ongoing way.

In the past year we have met with some seven hundred women in forty-two community forums. In addition, four hundred and fifty-eight women from seventy-eight different communities participated in the Provincial Women s Conference 2000 in Gander October 6 - 8. We asked women key questions which we are hoping will guide the work of the Advisory Council in the years ahead.

- How should the Advisory Council continue the work of involving women in community decision-making and leadership?
- What issues/concerns should the Advisory Council be addressing in the coming years?
- What are the major issues for women in your community / region?
- Women from the following communities have participated in Exploring Common Ground:

Aspen Cove
Bay Bulls

Avondale
Bay Roberts

Bell Island
Burgeo
Burin
Cartwright, Labrador
Charlottetown, Labrador
Churchill Falls, Labrador
Clarke s Beach
Conche
Creston North
Dover
Fogo
Gambo
Gander Bay South
Goose Bay, Labrador
Happy Valley, Labrador
Head of Bay D Espoir
Hopedale, Labrador
L Anse Au Loup, Labrador
Labrador City, Labrador
Little Bay Islands
Makkovik, Labrador
Middle Arm
Nain, Labrador
North West River, Labrador
Parsons Pond
Port au Port
Port au Port East
Portugal Cove
Rigolet, Labrador
Rushoon
Shoal Harbour
St. Anthony
St. Lawrence
Stephenville
Victoria
West St. Modeste, Labrador
Windsor, Ontario

Bishop s Falls
Burin Arm
Carbonear
Chamberlains
Chilliwack, British Columbia
Clareville
Conne River
Davis Inlet, Labrador
Creston South
Flatrock
Forteau, Labrador
Gander
Goulds
Grand Falls-Windsor
Harbour Breton
Holyrood
Jackson s Cove
Little Bay
L Anse Au Claire, Labrador
Lourdes
Marystown
Mount Pearl
Norris Point
Paradise
Pinware, Labrador
Port Aux Basques
Port Hope-Simpson, Labrador
Postville, Labrador
Rogers Cove
Sheshatshiu, Labrador
St. Alban s
St. John s
St. Lunaire-Griquet
Trepassey
Wabush, Labrador
Whitbourne
Witless Bay

Major Recommendations

Violence remains one of the great limiting obstacles to gender equality and any equality or equity agendas must acknowledge this fact.

The work to include women's perspective and experience should be resourced by all levels of government (municipal, provincial, federal).

A lens of inclusion is the foundation for understanding women's issues: awareness of culture, ethnicity, ability, class, sexuality, geography and life experiences is essential in discussing agendas for women's equality.

The reality of women's lives in Labrador and the rural/remote communities of Newfoundland must be acknowledged in any work on women's social and economic equality.

There is a need for a pro-active approach to including women in decision making at a community, regional, provincial and national level. Women need a range of options to learn participation and leadership skills: from kitchen table discussions, community meetings, and written materials to provincial conferences and workshops.

Young women desire to participate in equality-seeking work. They need opportunities to learn the history of the women's movement, to participate in feminist activism and to have a young woman's perspective included in strategies which address inequality.

The state of women's equality, inclusion and participation must be continuously analyzed and highlighted in the media.

Women need opportunities to meet at conferences. These should be biennial events organized in different regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What issues / concerns should the Advisory Council be addressing in the coming years?

Response

Organize provincial conferences with opportunities for women to listen and learn from one another.
Women and Decision Making: work to have more women involved in decision making and leadership at all levels of community and government.

Rural / Remote - continue to spend time in rural and remote regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Assist organizations which are not feminist to understand the feminist movement and that every woman can be included.

Mobilizing / Organizing - continue to help women to organize in the rural communities, but organize in ways which emphasize women's perspective and experience.

Continue speaking out and providing workshops and information sessions on all aspects of discrimination, equality and violence.

Poverty - Focus on poverty as a women's issue, especially the long term effects on children. Continue to highlight to government that many government policies and practices keep women and families poor.

Youth - Focus on involving young women in the active women's movement. Provide opportunities for young women to be heard as well as opportunities for young women to attend conferences and workshops where they learn from older feminists.

Continue to provide networking and assistance to women's councils, women centres, transition houses and any women's groups working on equality issues.

Continue to link social and economic issues, environment, violence and health with women's equality work.

Listen to the voices of Innu and Inuit women, provide opportunities for them to speak their reality.

Aboriginal Issues - take advantage of every opportunity to highlight the situation of aboriginal women and their families, especially in Labrador.

Insist that government appoint at least fifty percent women to all boards (zonal, health, commissions and advisory boards to government.)

Continue to involve women who are less educated about women's equality issues to assist them in understanding just how gender affects society and personal choices.

Insist that the provincial and federal governments provide proper funding to women's centres and women's shelters.

Profile the positive aspects of women's equality and educate the public on the negative impacts of exclusion.

Build partnerships and collaborate with men who care about women's equality.

Continue to point out to the federal government, especially the Status of Women Minister, that Canadian women are not equal. Newfoundland and Labrador women especially are not equal and we require sufficient resourcing to do equality-seeking work.

Encourage the provincial Status of Women Minister to spend some time in Aboriginal communities in Northern Coast of Labrador.

The Advisory Council and women's groups need to remember all aspects of Labrador women's lives, both aboriginal and white women.

Encourage MUN to provide decent money to the groups and individuals who are becoming research subjects.

Encourage the provincial government to implement midwifery services.

How should the Advisory Council continue the work of involving women in community decision-making and leadership?

Response

The Advisory Council needs to continue to speak up and speak out on women's issues to keep a strong media presence.

Personal contact works best . . . continue to meet one on one and in small groups.

We need more media attention paid to the need for and the absence of women in key decision-making positions.

Continue to validate all women's stories and experiences.

Women need workshops which help with self-esteem, build leadership and organize women to take action.

Young women need opportunities to meet to understand feminism and the women's movement.

We need to pay attention to the place of women in community decision-making in rural and remote regions in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Communicate, network and share all information.

Yearly conferences for women in different regions of our province. These should be held in Labrador as well as on the island.

Small kitchen table discussions work best; women feel safer and more comfortable to talk and disagree.

The Women's Centres need support because they are bogged down with dealing with poverty and violence in communities.

Recognize leadership qualities in women and support their running for political office regardless of political party.

Keep connecting church, union, activists, and young women. Our province is too small (population) for women to be divided.

Facilitated women's meetings (community to community) to enable women to exchange ideas, mentor one another and understand feminism.

Prior to municipal and school board elections, there should be special forums for women to learn how to organize both getting the concerns of women highlighted and getting elected.

Pay attention to the situation of aboriginal women; their voices are being lost.

Men and some women who think the way men do, are making decisions for women and their families without including women's experiences.

Be aware of the special needs of women when it comes to participating in forums and conferences, e.g., accessibility, child care, travel costs.

Encourage schools to teach girls leadership and organizational skills.

Please do not assume that all women are email and internet savvy, or have access to computers.

Innu and Inuit women could learn a lot from the successes of Mi Kmaq women in Conne River. The organizers could help make this discussion happen.

What are the major issues of concern to women in your community / region?

Response

The loss of community and sense of community.

Violence and the fear of violence.

The need for more women's centers and safe places where women can be supported in dealing with personal issues.

The treatment of women in the justice system.

The need for more women in governments (school boards, zonal boards, health boards and municipal governments).

High cost of training and education for young people.

The lack of legal aid and court services, especially in rural and remote parts of our province.

Poverty and the increasing gap between rich and poor.

The need for girls and young women to have opportunities to learn about feminism and equality issues.

The need for social workers in communities to assist women and families before the problems become too severe.

Women's equality groups should be spending more time working on the goals of the women's movement.

The state of health care in our province and the large number of women caring for family members who are discharged too early from hospitals.

Good, affordable child care options.

Unemployment, especially in rural/remote areas.

The low wages, long hours and insecurity of women providing home care services.

Equality between men and women.

The lack of mental health services for women dealing with stress, family breakdown, and severe mental health issues.

The bias affecting women and seasonal workers in the EI system.

The Federal Women s Program should provide appropriate funding for the everyday equality work provided by women s centres and emerging women s groups.

More women are forced to live in abusive relationships because there is little financial help or emotional support from the Department of Human Resources and Employment.

The lack of decent housing options for women, especially single mothers and older women leaving abusive relationships.

The arbitrary move of public servants from their permanent jobs in St. John s.

The need for child care options and good parenting programs which do not stigmatize women on income support.