
Annual Report 2002-2003

I President's Message

This report covers the completion of the three-year term of one Board and the appointment of a new Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. On International Women's Day, 2003, a new Board of Directors for the Advisory Council was appointed using for the first time the criteria developed by the outgoing Board and equality-seeking feminist organizations throughout the province. It is expected that these criteria will continue to be used to ensure that future Advisory Council Boards will be led by women who work on equality issues and this Council will continue to be linked to grassroots women's equality-seeking organizations.

We are particularly pleased this year to have undertaken and completed a piece of work which was long awaited by equality-seeking and women's organizations. *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*, a one hundred and thirty-four page resource guide was a nine month collaborative process involving grassroots Women's Councils/Centres, individual feminist women, the outgoing Board and the Staff of the Advisory Council. The publication is the Advisory Council's gift to an identified need for tools to assist women and women's groups in reconnecting with feminism and building healthy organizations. This book was launched on International Women's Day, 2003, is informed by decades of women's experiences and serves as a mentoring tool for connecting with feminist principles, practices and processes which deepen our common understandings of feminism as a basis of unity. Six months following the launch of *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*, more than 1600 copies were downloaded from the Council's website.

This year our province was involved in a consultation process. The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada was immediately challenged by the Advisory Council on its plans to include the voice and experiences of women and women's organizations. As we end 2003, we are particularly pleased to see an official government document which acknowledges the deep concerns with the state of women's equality in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Stronger policies must be implemented by the provincial government to facilitate the inclusion of women in decision-making, improve women's access to training and education and improve gender equality in the workplace. (Page 55, Our Place in Canada)

The years ahead will be exciting and challenging. The arms-length independent status of the Advisory Council will be critically examined by women in our province as relationships are forged with a new government administration. This Advisory Council, with its links to the broader women's community, must continue to put forward advice drawn from individual women and women's organizations with whom we share a common agenda for the social, cultural, legal, economic and political equality of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Joyce M. Hancock

II Letter of Transmittal

Honourable Joan Burke
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
PO Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Dear Minister Burke,
On behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I am pleased to present to you the Annual Report of our Council covering the period April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003. The Auditor General's report for the same period has already been forwarded to you and we have included the significant highlights within this report.

This report covers a period of change within the Status of Women portfolio. Minister Sandra Kelly was replaced by Minister Yvonne Jones, and as we complete this report for presentation to the House of Assembly, a Progressive Conservative administration has been elected and we welcome you, Minister Burke, as the Status of Women Minister. My Board and I look forward to working with you and your government on issues of women's social, economic, legal, cultural and political equality.

Respectfully,

Joyce M. Hancock
President

The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women is an organization set up in 1980 by the Progressive Conservative government of that day. The Council is independent from government with a mandate to advise, advocate and educate on matters pertaining to the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. Throughout its twenty-three year history, Board and Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council have worked with Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, Status of Women Ministers and interested Members of the House of Assembly to advance the status of women throughout the province. The Advisory Council is arms-length from government and draws its information, analysis and strategies from the provincial women's community through equality-seeking feminist organizations, as well as individual women and women's groups with whom we share a common equality agenda.

The Status of Women Ministry is comprised of an internal arm, the Women's Policy Office, and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the external mechanism. The Council has a legislated mandate and an eleven woman Board which is appointed for three year terms. The President's position is salaried and she works to ensure an active presence on women's equality and inclusion.

The Advisory Council works in areas of advising, advocating, lobbying and educating on issues which affect the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. This work is accomplished by using the information and analysis of the Board, the skills of Staff and the sharing of strategies with other women's equality/equity organizations with whom we share a common agenda.

III About the Advisory Council

IV Advisory Council Philosophy

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women works to include feminist principles, processes and practices in all of our activities and initiatives. This is accomplished at our Board meetings and within our day-to-day approach to Staff work. This year we were able to make decisions regarding our feminist premises through our work on the *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* project. The Advisory Council Board is committed to creating a women-centred environment and having clearly defined premises is the underpinning of this way of working. As the Council responds to the equality concerns of women in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Board and Staff must feel connected to shared vision and values. The following fourteen feminist premises, developed over a twelve-year period, have been accepted by the Board and Staff of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women. These represent the “Basis of Unity” for our organization.

- To be a feminist is to assert our equal value as women in a society that too often undervalues our worth, contributions and experiences.
- To be a feminist is to challenge the inequities in power and privilege that exist because of sexism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, racism and all other forms of exclusion.
- To be a feminist is to question the institution of family as it is currently structured, and to challenge the roles and responsibilities of women and men in family care giving.

- To be a feminist is to be a strategist in challenging structures and institutions that are built upon male values and experience, and that limit women’s equal participation.
- To be a feminist is to view the world through our women’s eyes from our women’s experience, and to see this lens as valuable and necessary in the pursuit of equality and inclusion.
- To be a feminist is to recognize, include and value women’s different kinds of knowledge, including knowledge informed by personal experience and knowledge acquired through work and education.
- To be a feminist is to acknowledge that the world is not always a safe place for women to speak out about inequality. The strength that exists in the collective voice of women’s organizations makes our challenges safer and more effective.
- To be a feminist is to take responsibility for learning about the issues that often seem to divide us (the environment, war, sexuality), and to create safe spaces to talk about our disagreements.
- To be a feminist is to challenge men to support our feminist agenda, and to support pro-feminist men who share our common agenda for peace, equality and justice.

- To be a feminist is to take pride in feminism as a movement for transforming the world into an equitable, peaceful and just place for women, men and children.
- To be a feminist is to examine our organization’s principles, practices and processes to ensure that we are creating opportunities to include the perspectives of women whose voices have not been included (e.g., young women, seniors, lesbians, Aboriginal women).
- To be a feminist is to take our agenda for women’s equality and inclusion into every meeting, regardless of the structured agenda.
- To be a feminist is to learn about women’s history and the history of the women’s movement.
- To be a feminist is to make every meeting a celebration, and every celebration a meeting: to continuously acknowledge both the challenges and joys of working for and with women.

V How the Advisory Council works

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women was originally established as a body for research and advising government on matters relating to the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. In 1996, the Advisory Council lost \$100,000 of its funding and two Staff positions. However, at the time the Board was also restructured to include members nominated by seven of the equality-seeking feminist organizations.

- Women should be comfortable working

This process was used again in 1999 and eight of the provincial equality-seeking organizations were invited to nominate women to serve a three-year term as members on the Board of Directors of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

These efforts to strengthen the Advisory Council Board were seen as positive steps by successive Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, the 1996 and 1999 Advisory Council Boards and women’s equality-seeking organizations throughout the province. Throughout the 2002-2003 period, the Advisory Council Board worked with women’s equality-seeking groups, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women’s Policy Office to develop criteria for appointment to the Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The following criteria were used in the selection of women to serve on the 2003-2006 Board of Directors of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

– A Criteria for Nomination

To be nominated and/or considered for appointment to the Board of the Advisory Council:

- Women should be known by their peers or within their community or region for a demonstrated leadership and commitment to working on improving the status of women, and/or women should have an attachment to an equality-seeking feminist organization in their community, region and/or province.

within the role of the Advisory Council

in areas of advising, advocating, challenging and educating to advance the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. As well, women will have a demonstrated ability to work on equality and equity issues from a community, regional, or provincial perspective.

B Principles for the Composition of the Advisory Council Board

The principles of equality and equity will guide the decision making when choosing the women to make up the Board of the Advisory Council. In addition, every consideration will be given to:

- The need for regional representation.
- The need for a combination of women who work on equality issues from a perspective within education, business/economic development, social policy/social issues, aboriginal concerns and community-based organizations.
- Priority be given to women who have demonstrated their ability in a leadership capacity working on issues of women's equality, equity and inclusion.
- Priority be given to women who have developed or who are willing to develop a connection to grassroots equality-seeking feminist organizations in their community and region.

C Process for Nominations to the Advisory

How the Advisory Council works (contd.):

Council Board

The Minister will seek written nominations from:

- Members of the House of Assembly.
- The outgoing Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Women's groups who publicly define themselves as equality-seeking feminist organizations working on the social, cultural, economic, political and/or legal equality of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Individual women who have demonstrated their commitment to women's equality and equity work throughout the province.

D Review of Nominations to the Advisory Council Board

Following the exercise of gathering names of women from the four groups, the Minister will meet with a committee of the Advisory Council (which will include the outgoing President) to review nominations prior to making appointments. The purpose of this review will be to ensure that the criteria have been met. The vital links to equality-seeking feminist groups provide the Advisory Council with a vehicle for hearing, on an ongoing basis, the experiences of women in their communities, regions and throughout the province. This ensures that the Advisory Council draws its information, analysis and strategies directly from the provincial women's community. It is also a mechanism for examining the realities and experiences of government policy and direction and how these impact on women and families.

Through Advising/Advocating/Lobbying:

The President of the Advisory Council meets regularly with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. These sessions are opportunities for the Minister to be provided with information and analysis from the broader feminist community. The Minister also meets with the full Board of the Advisory Council for a two hour period during their quarterly meetings. In addition, the President meets with departmental Ministers and senior officials to discuss issues which have implications on equality and equity.

This work has proven successful because a trust relationship develops between the Status of Women Minister and the Advisory Council President. The Minister is then able to assist other departments to “open doors” to the women’s community to allow them to hear the analysis and challenges in working toward an equality agenda. This method of collaboration is embedded in a respect for the arms-length status of the Advisory Council rather than a shared agenda for departmental direction. The role of the Council in advising, advocacy and lobbying is often seen as a demonstration in democracy whereby the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women is provided respect and resourcing to challenge or support government direction depending on how women’s equality is impacted.

Through Consultation and Collaboration:

Consultation is accomplished in several ways.

A particular government department may undertake policy or legislative changes, and wish to discuss these changes with women. The Advisory Council will draw together a group of women in different regions and participate with these women in providing information and experience regarding how proposed changes will affect women, families and communities. Sometimes it is the organized women’s groups who wish to meet with Ministers and senior departmental officials, and the President often plays a facilitation role in these proceedings. There are also times when a group of women will request a meeting with the Advisory Council President and Staff. These are wonderful opportunities to garner a broad understanding of women’s experiences and analysis, and to ensure that these are articulated at meetings with government officials.

Through Outreach and Community Involvement:

It is important for the Advisory Council to maintain an active presence outside our St. John’s office. We accomplish this by involving ourselves in the ongoing work of women’s groups in different regions of the province. The Council President and Community Liaison / Communications Director present workshops and facilitate meetings to assist women’s organizations in increasing their skills and abilities in gender inclusive analysis, and in developing feminist processes within their organizations.

Through Media:

The Provincial Advisory Council has developed a strong media presence which is critical to our role in ensuring that a feminist perspective is provided on social and economic issues and their differing impacts on women. Because the resources of the Council are limited, a media voice serves to inform government decision makers and the general public that women often have alternative ways of examining issues. The President of the Advisory Council spends a great deal of her time offering a gender perspective on “issues of the day” both in a reactive and proactive way as a strategy to keeping women’s equality issues on the public agenda.

Through Public Education:

Although the Advisory Council has no Staff position committed to policy analysis, research and writing, we are still able to produce original material. This is accomplished by using the skills of the Board, the multi-tasking of our Staff and by working in conjunction with other feminist groups who share a common analysis and understanding of equality issues.

Through Communication:

The Advisory Council provides an everyday presence on equality issues. Many women’s equality-seeking organizations, anti-violence coalitions, as well as transition houses and shelters look to this Council for support and leadership on issues of equality and violence. The Council Staff facilitates focus sessions, conference calls and meetings both in our St. John’s office and elsewhere in the province. We produce briefs, newsbulletins, moderate a

listserv and an interactive website, as well as create materials on issues of equality and inclusion. The Advisory Council is constantly challenged to provide analysis and strategies to assist women’s organizations to mobilize on important gender issues which impact on women, families and communities.

VI Council Members

The 2003-2006 Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women was appointed using the *Criteria for Nomination* (see page 4). Equality-seeking feminist organizations were contacted by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, as was the outgoing Board of the Advisory Council. These groups were given an opportunity to submit the names of women for consideration for appointment to the Advisory Council Board. In addition, individual women who felt that they personally met the criteria were invited to bring forward a resume and information indicating their interest in serving on the Advisory Council Board. As is the government protocol for Board appointments, members of the House of Assembly were also contacted and asked to provide nominations for consideration in appointing a new Advisory Council Board. However, this time at the request of the Status of Women Minister they were asked to use the criteria outlined.

The present Board of the Advisory Council is comprised of women who live and work in different communities and regions throughout our province. Three of these women are from Labrador. Board members have experience and expertise in community development, education (including post-secondary), business, tourism, health (including mental health), academia,

aboriginal issues and policy analysis.

The women who make up the Advisory Council have a broad range of experience working from an equality perspective and are connected as well to grassroots equality-seeking Status of Women Councils in their regions. All of the Board members would consider themselves feminists, providing a rich variety of thinking, analysis and experience drawn from a shared world view on the need for equality, equity and inclusion for the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The broad range of experience and commitment of this Board provides the government, through the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, with a wealth of knowledge on gender concerns. The everyday work of the Council President informs government regarding the different and differing impacts departmental direction has on women, families and communities throughout our province.

Members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council for the 2002-2003 period:

Joyce M. Hancock, President, Stephenville
Susan Hollett, Vice President and Finance Chair, Shoal Harbour
Geri Devereaux, Personnel Chair, Gander
Phyllis Artiss, Signing Officer, St. John's
Michelle Skinner, Bay St. George
Dorothy Fewer, Grand Falls-Windsor
Shirley Squires, Wabush
Frances Murphy, Nain
Michelle House, Corner Brook
Valerie Anderson, Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Joan Wilson, Port Aux Basques.

On March 8, 2003, International Women's Day, the 2003-2006 Advisory Council Board was appointed by the Status of Women

Minister following the application of criteria developed in conjunction with the Status of Women Minister, the outgoing Board of the Provincial Advisory Council and grassroots equality-seeking feminist organizations. The new eleven member Board is made up of new and returning members:

Joyce M. Hancock, President, Stephenville
Susan Hollett, Vice President and Finance Chair, Shoal Harbour
Dorothy Fewer, Personnel Chair, Grand Falls-Windsor
Phyllis Artiss, Signing Officer, St. John's
Frances Murphy, Nain
Joan Wilson, Port Aux Basques.
Jacqui Winter, Wabush
Michelle Boutcher, St. John's
Evie Newton, Corner Brook
Bernice Hollett, Happy Valley-Goose Bay
Janice Haynes-Jamieson, Swift Current

VII Council Staff

The work of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council would not be possible without the everyday presence and commitment of the Staff. The Council has not recovered from the financial and personnel loss of the 1996 program review which makes carrying out a provincially legislated mandate a monumental task. For a few years the Advisory Council was able to acquire project resources to add a Staff member for short-term initiatives. These federal funds are no longer available to our organization. We were disappointed again in 2003 to see our provincial budget request for a permanent outreach position denied.

The Advisory Council Board is indebted to the Staff who continue to carry multiple job descriptions and multitask on a day-to-day basis to enable the Advisory Council to be a strong voice on issues of equality for women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women for the year ending March 31, 2003:

Joyce M. Hancock, President/Chief Executive Officer

Melanie Parsons, Secretary/Bookkeeper

Michelle Smith, Community Liaison / Communications Director

Mary Clarke, Projects Coordinator (January-March 2003)

Amber Milley, Summer Student 2003.

Advisory Council Home:

131 LeMarchant Road

St. John's, NL

A1C 2H3

Phone: (709)753-7270

Fax: (709-753-2606

Email: pacs@nf.aibn.com

Web: www.pacs.com

VIII Council Work

The Advisory Council Board made a conscious decision to work on two major activities from April 2002 to March 2003. Following on the recommendations from the *Exploring Common Ground Provincial Women's Conference*, evaluations from some four hundred and fifty conference participants provided a strong endorsement for the mandated work of the Advisory Council.

Yet, it was clear that without the sustaining presence of the nine grassroots equality-seeking women's organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador communities and regions, the Advisory Council work would be very difficult indeed. These organizations received minuscule dollars to provide service delivery and they continued to tell the Advisory Council that they have less and less time to spend on advocacy and even less time to devote to developing healthy board processes and practices. The Board and Staff took a decision to develop a resource tool which could be useful to women's organizations working to develop a common understanding of feminism as a basis of unity for their equality-seeking groups.

The second major focus was on developing criteria for the selection of women to serve on the 2003-2006 and subsequent Boards of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

These would be two challenging initiatives. The Advisory Council Board were aware that our Staff composition was limited and the ongoing work had to continue in order for the legislated mandate to be fulfilled. It was with great pride on International Women's Day, 2003, the new Provincial Advisory Council Board was announced following the criteria developed throughout the past year, and the publication *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* was released.

Continued...

The Advisory Council Board is also involved in the work undertaken by the President and Staff between meetings. Yet, we feel that there has to be a strong connection to the work of equality-seeking organizations who do similar advocacy work in their communities if the women's movement in Newfoundland and Labrador is to continue to have an impact on improving the status of women in our province. The two initiatives undertaken in the past year were informed by the analysis and knowledge of these grassroots feminist organizations.

educating on issues pertaining to the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our quarterly Board meetings provide Council members and Staff an opportunity to inform one another on the issues which affect gender equality in communities and regions throughout the province. Because many of the Advisory Council Board are involved with local Status of Women Councils, Transition Houses/Shelters and/or Anti-Violence Coalitions, there is time spent during our meetings hearing about the issues and initiatives of importance to these organizations.

IX Council Meetings

The Board of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women meets quarterly and during the year ending March 31, 2003, the Council completed its 93rd, 94th, 95th, and 96th quarterly meetings. These meetings generally cover a two-day period and were held at the Advisory Council office in St. John's.

June 27 & 28, 2002
October 4, 2002
November 21 & 22, 2002
March 27 & 28, 2003

Although the three-year term for the Advisory Council was completed in November 2002, the process of using the developed criteria for appointing the new Board meant that the Advisory Council members who had completed their term were asked by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to continue until a new Board was appointed. The new Board appointed on March 8, 2003, a blend of new and returning Board members, began the work of advising, advocating and During this period the Board was actively

The Status of Women Minister and/or the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Women's Policy Office meets with members of the Board four times throughout the year. These are important opportunities for the Minister to hear equality concerns articulated by members of the Board who live and work in different areas of the province. In addition to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Board meets with other Ministers and senior officials within other government departments to discuss policy and programs, and to hear the Board's thinking on departmental directions which affect women, families and communities.

To better inform the Board about the work of the President and Staff between meetings, the President, Community Liaison/Communications Director, Secretary/Bookkeeper and project workers provide reports at the quarterly meetings. In addition to the Staff reports there are media, advocacy/crisis calls and financial reports submitted to Board members which provide a detailed account of the work accomplished by Staff in fulfilling the Advisory Council's equality agenda. involved in the developmental work for the

Feminism: Our Basis of Unity process, as well as the development of the new criteria for selecting future Advisory Council Board Members.

Between meetings the members of the Advisory Council Board continue to be involved in the work carried out by the President and Staff. The Vice President serves as the Finance Chair and oversees the Council's financial direction. She is constantly communicating through telephone and electronic mail to assist the President with strategic planning and decision making.

The Council Board member from Gander has served as the Personnel Chair and works with the President in Staff evaluations and hiring. The St. John's Board member has served as a signing officer and assists the President by attending consultations and key meetings to ensure that the Advisory Council is able to bring a strong gender perspective. All of the women who make up the Advisory Council make themselves available to provide advice and information to the President between meetings.

This Board has been so much more than a Council which comes together eight days per year. Instead, through their dedication and commitment to the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women, they make this organization a strong and vibrant everyday presence on women's equality and inclusion.

This report covers a period when one Advisory Council Board completed its term and a new Board began. The first meeting of our new Board consisted of an orientation to the work and involvements of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of

The Advisory Council President is an

Women. In addition, we spent time at this orientation meeting connecting our work on equality in Newfoundland and Labrador to the broader equality agenda in our province and country. The Basis of Unity which had been developed by previous Boards was discussed and accepted by the 2003-2006 Advisory Council Board.

This Annual Report offers a brief reflection of the Advisory Council's work in the areas of advising/advocacy, outreach/community involvement/consultation, public education and media for the year ending March 31, 2003.

X Advising / Advocating / Lobbying

The legislated mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council is to advise government on matters affecting the status of women in our province. We accomplish this work in a number of ways. The Board meets quarterly with the Status of Women Minister and the President meets with her twice monthly. This is an important component of our work as the Minister gets to hear on an ongoing basis concerns expressed by individual women and equality-seeking organizations. Since the Council President is also an employee of the Council, between meetings she meets with other government Ministers or senior officials to bring forward particular issues with departmental policy or direction which impact women, families and communities.

The work of advising, advocating and lobbying is a critical component of the work of this Advisory Council. The following is a sample of issues brought to the attention of government during the period ending March 31, 2003.

original member of the 1996 Province's

Strategic Social Plan Consultation and has served on the Premier's Council on Social Policy Development since 1998. In her work with this Premier's Council she has served on the Social Audit Subcommittee and the sub-committee looking at the new legislation of Human Resources and Employment. Since the lead Minister Responsible for the Strategic Social Plan and often the Premier attend part of the quarterly Premier's Council meetings, these are great opportunities to bring forward both gender and social policy concerns.

- The President of the Advisory Council met with the new Minister of Human Resources and Employment as well as the Deputy Minister. These were opportunities to bring forward concerns with the delivery system for clients in need of income support, as well as concerns that women with young children were feeling forced into training or employment.
- The President and Executive Director of Women In Resource Development Committee met with the Minister Responsible for Post-Secondary Education to discuss the situation of women and work at the Voisey's Bay site.
- The Advisory Council President met with the Minister of Health and Community Services, as well as with senior officials, to discuss concerns with the closing of Libra Transition House in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.
- The President of the Advisory Council
- The Advisory Council participated in a roundtable with the Minister of Health

met with the three Commissioners of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada to discuss the need for a strategy to include women and women's experiences in the process of these consultations.

- The Advisory Council Board had several meetings with the Status of Women Minister to define and discuss a process for having feminist equality-seeking organizations involved in the future composition of the Boards of the Advisory Council.
 - The Advisory Council President met with St. John's East Member of Parliament, Norm Doyle, to discuss the issue of a renewed look at a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in our country.
 - The Advisory Council met with Newfoundland and Labrador Senator Joan Cook to discuss the situation of gender equality work in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout the country. We discussed the lack of gender analysis in the proposed federal divorce legislation.
 - The President of the Advisory Council attended the Financial Roundtable in St. John's. She brought forward concerns with the lack of resourcing for the advocacy and service delivery work of women's organizations.
- and Community Services to discuss the findings of the Romanow and Kirby



reports. The Council was pushing to have equity as a principle of healthcare as per the recommendations of the province's Strategic Health forums.

- The Advisory Council encouraged the lead Minister for the Violence Prevention Initiative to deal with the financial resourcing needs of the Provincial Association Against Family Violence.
- The Advisory Council President met with the Intergovernmental Affairs Minister to discuss the values and vision which would guide the work of the Royal Commission and how the history of women and women's place in Newfoundland and Labrador would be incorporated.
- The Advisory Council President has continued to raise concerns with the lack of funding to the legislated mandated work of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as well as the situation of Staff positions being unfilled at the Women's Policy Office.
- The Advisory Councils of Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, North West Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have been lobbying the federal Status of Women Minister to examine the way equality-seeking work is not impacting on federal departmental direction.
- There were a number of meetings with the Minister of Justice to discuss the
- The Advisory Council was successful in our provincial lobby to have our Premier and Status of Women Minister

state of Legal Aid services, the lack of programs for women at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women and the impending changes to the federal divorce legislation.

- The Advisory Council has joined a number of community groups, unions and health care workers to prepare for the release of the Romanow report and to influence the direction taken by the provincial department of Health and Community Services.
- The Advisory Council continues to bring forward concerns with the Violence Prevention Initiative and the Provincial Coordinating Committee. These concerns centre around the lack of gender/equality analysis in the organizations which are charged with making decisions for the direction of government/community anti-violence work.
- The Advisory Council met with the Status of Women Minister and three Members of the House of Assembly for Labrador to discuss ways to support the work of Labrador women to organize a Labrador women's conference.
- The Council President met with officials at the Department of Education to discuss the need to have women profiled more in the Social Studies curriculum.

write letters of support calling for a revisiting of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada.

XI Consultation / Community Work

The Advisory Council works to provide feminist analysis to a number of government initiated consultations, as well as committees and initiatives undertaken by other groups. We accomplish this by having the President, Community Liaison or Projects Coordinator present at these sessions to bring a strong gender inclusive perspective.

The Council also initiates consultations with Ministers and senior officials interested in including a gender-based analysis in new legislation, policy or departmental direction. This work could not be accomplished without incorporating the knowledge and expertise which exists in the broader feminist community throughout our province. The Advisory Council uses its strategic position as a legislated provincial body and its arms-length position to coordinate opportunities for Ministers and senior officials to be advised by grassroots women's equality-seeking organizations. The relationships that have been built between the Council President, Cabinet Ministers and Members of the House of Assembly are crucial to this work as reciprocal trust is not a given between the broader women's community and people who work in government.

Conference Calls With Women's Equality-Seeking Organizations ~

This is a key method of bringing a Participating in the conference call discussions for the period April 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003:

— Women from the Bay St.

strong feminist perspective to issues of equality, equity and inclusion. Although there were a number of conference calls on specific issues, the Advisory Council continues to be a vehicle which provides opportunities to women's organizations to network, share information on specific projects and advocacy work and to develop strategies, actions and direction. It is also important as a consultation tool to ensure that the Advisory Council has the very best information and critical feminist thinking from organizations with whom we share a common equality-seeking agenda.

The Advisory Council attempts to have a conference call every two months. However, when critical issues arise a women's group will often request or co-host a conference call with the Council as a way to respond to a government or departmental direction. Since beginning this way of communicating and consulting three years ago, we have built a consistent number of participating groups. We are attempting to reach out to regions of the province where there are no organized equality-seeking organizations to better inform the knowledge and analysis of our Council, and also as a method to encourage women to form equality organizations.

George Status of Women Council/Centre.

— Transition House Staff from Corner Brook, Cara House in

- Gander, Libra House in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Grace Sparkes House in Marystown, Labrador West Family Crisis Shelter, Nain Safe House and Iris Kirby House in St. John's.
- Women from Trepassey.
- Women from the Provincial Association Against Family Violence.
- Women from the Nipavut Women's Group in Nain.
- Women from the Corner Brook Status of Women Council / Centre.
- Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence in St. John's, Central Newfoundland, Labrador and Western Newfoundland.
- Torngait Inuit Annait, Makkovik.
- Memorial University Women's Resource Centre.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.
- Discovery Women's Network, Clarenville.
- Gateway Status of Women Council / Centre, Port Aux Basques.
- Women's Studies, Memorial University.
- Churchill Falls women.
- Women from St. John's Status of Women Council/Centre.
- Gander Status of Women

One of the conference calls coordinated and hosted by the Advisory Council was with the newly appointed Status of Women Minister. This was an introduction of the Minister to the organized women's community and an

- Council/Centre.
- Labrador West Status of Women Council/Centre.
- Mokami Status of Women Council/Centre.
- Central Newfoundland Status of Women Council/Centre
- Board members of the Provincial Advisory Council.

The topics of discussion at our conference calls included:

- Women's experiences of legal aid.
- Advisory Council's work on building healthy equality-seeking feminist organizations.
- Gender-based analysis/feminist inclusive analysis.
- Proposed Human Resources and Employment legislation.
- The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada.
- Federal divorce legislation / custody and access issues.
- Housing project led by the St. John's Status of Women Council.
- The need for a renewed federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women.
- Criteria for future Advisory Council Boards.
- Custody and access project led by Gander Women's Council.
- The lack of mental health services.

opportunity for the Minister to hear the issues and concerns of women's organizations in different communities and regions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Consultation / Community Work (contd.)

- ***Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*** ~ A major piece of consultation work during this period was our process to develop a tool for women's equality-seeking organizations who are struggling to have healthy processes and practices for Boards, Staff and volunteers. To undertake this work the President and Community Liaison / Communications Director, who is also the principle writer of *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*, began focussed work with the three Women's Councils / Centres in Western Newfoundland, as well as the Labrador West Status of Women Council and Resource Centre. There were a series of conference calls, face-to-face meetings, workshops, telephone calls and electronic email on a weekly basis for a six month period to ensure that the Advisory Council's publication would be relevant and useful to the needs articulated by the Women's Councils, Transition Houses and other organizations working on equality and anti-violence activities.

At each step in this process the Advisory Council consulted with the target users of the tool which meant that the final product, *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*, is built on a realistic foundation, as well as the critical thinking and experiences of women who have been doing equality-seeking

- ***Women Interested in Successful Employment*** ~ The Council's

work for decades.

- ***Provincial Coordinating Committee of the Violence Prevention Initiative*** ~ The Advisory Council is represented on the Provincial Coordinating Committee by the President. There are ongoing meetings with this body which continue to be a very frustrating process. Our concerns center around the lack of gender analysis in this decision-making body.

- ***St. John's Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence*** ~ The Advisory Council plays a major role with this organization. In the past year we have served on an advisory committee to a special project initiative, *Moving Masculinities*. In addition, the Council's Community Liaison / Communications Director is an executive member of this anti-violence coalition and also represents the Regional Coordinating Coalition on the Provincial Coordinating Committee. The President, Community Liaison / Communications Director and Projects Coordinator were on the action committee planning a gender/anti-violence conference for April 2003.

Community Liaison / Communications Director is a member of the Women Interested in Successful Employment

Board.

- ***Women In Resource Development Committee*** ~ The Advisory Council President Co-chairs this organization which was established in 1999 to foster an environment and lobby for the participation of women in resource-based training and employment. One of our more successful undertakings is the Orientation to Trades and Technology program offered in conjunction with the College of the North Atlantic.

The Women In Resource Development Committee Board is attempting to obtain charitable status, influence the hiring of women at the Voisey's Bay site, sensitize the College of the North Atlantic campus Staff to gender awareness and advocate for the federal Minister Responsible for Human Resources Development Canada to change employment insurance eligibility requirements which hinder women from taking trades and technology training.

- ***Corner Brook Transition House Retreat*** ~ In June the Advisory Council President planned and facilitated a retreat for the Staff, administration and Board of the Corner Brook Transition House. This was an opportunity for these women to find common understandings of feminism as a basis for their organization's practices.

- ***Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health*** ~ The Advisory Council President and Community Liaison/Communications Director
- ***The Provincial Association Against Family Violence*** ~ The Provincial

participated in a roundtable with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. This roundtable was a series of discussions taking place with women in the Atlantic provinces to examine and discuss practices for social and economic inclusion.

- ***Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Consultation*** ~ The Advisory Council participated in a consultation undertaken by the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary to discuss the lack of police presence needed to provide a full compliment of policing services in St. John's, Labrador West, Corner Brook and Conception Bay South. The Council President challenged the consultation on the need for a police presence and involvement on a continuous basis with community groups working on anti-violence initiatives rather than a simple "law and order" agenda.

- ***Alternative Dispute Resolution Work*** ~ The Advisory Council hosted a Nova Scotia researcher and law professor. This woman outlined her research of the experiences of Nova Scotian women with restorative justice and mediation programs. Concerns centred around the issues of gender and power as they relate to family law matters.

Association Against Family Violence and the Provincial Advisory Council on

the Status of Women continue to work closely. The Association is an umbrella organization for the Transition Houses and Shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador, yet it receives only project funding to fulfill a provincial mandate. The Association's Coordinator participates in the quarterly meetings of the Advisory Council as a strategy to maintain a strong connection to anti-violence and equality work. The Advisory Council Staff work with the Coordinator to be of assistance to her provincial initiatives. This organization is critical to the work of the Transition Houses and Shelters in the province and will need more ongoing provincial funding if it is to continue to be effective.

– ***Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women*** ~ The Advisory Council President met with a number of correctional officers from the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women. There was a discussion on the need for women in senior management positions, as well as a pregnancy policy for female correctional officers who are pregnant and unable to work in this high-risk environment.

– ***National Coalition of Advisory Councils*** ~ The Advisory Council President continues to Co-chair, with the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council, a national Coalition of Advisory Councils. This past year the Coalition worked to engage individual

women in leadership positions, equality-seeking national women's organizations, women Members of Parliament and women Senators in our country, province and territories. The discussion centred around the need for a renewal or revisiting of the 1971 federal Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The Coalition of Provincial/Territorial Advisory Councils undertook to inform and engage women in our region. The central concern is the lack of real attention to a national equality agenda.

The Coalition feels that the federal government is not adequately apprised of the reality of women and families. There is no longer a federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women and some provinces no longer have independent, arms-length Advisory Councils to advise and advocate on behalf of women's social, political, economic, cultural and legal equality. During this period the Coalition met with senior officials from Status of Women Canada and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health to discuss the federal mechanisms which deal with equality concerns and the lack of accountability in the federal departmental gender inclusive analysis tool.

XII Outreach

Although the Advisory Council is a

provincially mandated body its ability to provide a provincial presence is restricted. The Council has only three Staff including the

President. The work of lobbying, advocacy, media response and consultation is largely accomplished in St. John's. However, both the President and Community Liaison/Communications Director are involved in as much outreach work as possible both in St. John's and other areas of the province. This work is accomplished through facilitation, presentations, developing workshops and participating in activities of women's organizations in different areas of the province.

— The President and Project Coordinator travelled to Clarenville to meet with women connected to the Discovery Women's Network. The Advisory Council organized and facilitated a workshop on connecting women's groups to an equality-seeking agenda. There was an additional meeting to discuss a process to develop a local Women's Centre to serve women in the Clarenville - Bonavista region.

— The Advisory Council was successful in getting the Commissioners of the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada to facilitate a roundtable of feminists to discuss our concerns as Newfoundland and Labrador women and equality-seeking organizations. The discussion concentrated on women's equality and the equality-seeking rights of women, the place of women in decision making and the lack of mechanisms in our province and country for improving the social, political, economic, cultural and legal status of women.

— At the Triennial Public Service Alliance of Canada conference the Advisory Council President developed

— The Advisory Council President was a speaker at the Mount Pearl Chamber of Commerce annual women's luncheon on the topic of women's place in decision making and leadership.

— The Advisory Council President was the keynote speaker at a public forum discussing the need for restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution processes. In addition, the Advisory Council President has facilitated two sessions for the individuals being trained by the Metro Community Chaplaincy group to provide support to high risk offenders returning from prison. Our Council has deep concerns with some of these practices where there is no inclusion of victims' voices or any gender-based analysis of justice programs.

— On International Women's Day, 2003, the Advisory Council chaired a media conference and hosted a women's community luncheon. The media conference was attended by faculty members at Memorial University, the provincial Status of Women Minister, Senator Joan Cook, past members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council and women from the St. John's women's community. During the events the nine month project was described and *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* was launched as a resource tool for women's organizations throughout the province.

and presented a keynote address and a workshop on pornography and the links to violence and abuse.

- The Community Liaison/Communications Director and the Advisory Council President spent several days in Labrador City. The Council facilitated sessions for the local Status of Women Council, Staff of the Labrador West Family Crisis Shelter and the local Family Resource Centre. Once again the presentations and discussion were an examination of the practices, processes and principles necessary for healthy equality-seeking, anti-violence work.
- The Advisory Council hosted a morning session with the Coordinators of Oxfam organizations from Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain, the United States and Canada. The discussion centred around how gender was being impacted in international work. Concerns were raised and discussed regarding the divisions which are developed between equity work and gender equality work.
- The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre was assisted in their efforts to plan events and profile the work of this provincial organization. The Advisory Council Community Liaison / Communications Director, who was the past Coordinator of the Sexual Assault Centre, and the President participated in several media and public events to bring a focus on the importance of the Centre to the women and girls of this province.
- The Advisory Council has continued to work with the Coordinator of Torngait Inuit Anait and a member of the Nain women's group, Nipavut. They are presently reworking the guidelines for healthy women's organizations following upon the work accomplished during the 2002 visit with North coast
- The Advisory Council President attended a forum in Prince Edward Island examining a justice options program. This program provides services rather than incarceration in matters of domestic violence. While in Prince Edward Island she facilitated a session on *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* with the Board and Staff of the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- The Advisory Council President provided the keynote address at the celebration marking International Women's Day in Grand Falls-Windsor. During her visit she met with members of the Board of the Central Newfoundland Status of Women Council / Centre to discuss their concerns with work to develop common understandings of feminism as a basis of unity for their equality-seeking organization.
- The Advisory Council President and Community Liaison/Communications Director developed and presented a number of sessions and workshops for high schools, university classes and college students. There are continuous requests for this work throughout the province. Yet, the majority of our efforts are confined to St. John's, although the President attempts to take up this challenge when she is invited to another region of the province.

women.

- There were a number of peace rallies taking place in the city of St. John's. Members of the Advisory Council Staff participated in these as an individual and organizational stand on equality and peace.

XII Advocacy / Crisis and Information

The Advisory Council office in St. John's receives dozens of calls every week from women who find themselves in personal crisis, women needing to be referred for legal, mental health, or social services and women's organizations who need advice about an organizational issue. All Staff at the Advisory Council are able to provide peer support and/or referral.

This area of our work, although not in the Advisory Council's mandate, involves a great deal of time, but is absolutely necessary at a time when waiting lists for health and legal services have become so lengthy and grassroots feminist organizations are overwhelmed with service delivery to women and families.

Many of the calls to our office from organizations centre around disputes between volunteers, Staff needing advice with media work or the need to engage the Advisory Council Staff in a local strategic action

- A woman called to discuss the problems she was having with her legal aid lawyer. She was faced with the possibility of agreeing to share custody

discussion. The personal calls from women focus on violence and abuse, inadequate housing or income, divorce, child support, custody and access, workplace harassment and problems with legal aid. The following are examples of issues brought to the Staff of the Advisory Council in this period, as well as the direction and Staff time involved with this aspect of Advisory Council work. Many of the calls to our office are often not recorded because time does not permit us to give adequate attention to collecting statistical information.

Information 2002-2003 Referral Calls	
Type of Calls:	Health: 60 Legal: 65 Violence: 84 Information: 397 <i>(including drop ins & use of resource centre)</i>
Response to Calls:	Referral - 232 Advocacy - 158 Information given - 198
Number of calls recorded:	588
Time commitment recorded:	102.41 Hours

with an abusive partner and had not even met her lawyer two days prior to the court proceedings.

- A woman in a rural/remote community feared her partner’s abuse would begin again when a judge sentenced him to “stay home.”
- A number of women called the Advisory Council office to discuss harassment at the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.
- A woman whose abusive partner was returning to that area of the province was attempting to relocate to St. John’s or outside the province.
- A woman came to the Advisory Council office to find food and a place to “clean up.” She spent the morning discussing her need for mental health counselling and addiction services.
- A woman incarcerated at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women requested the assistance of the Advisory Council. She talked about the need for counselling and the lack of a social worker for months while the usual worker was on maternity leave.
- Staff and Board members at a women’s organization requested assistance in dealing with Board and Staff conflict.
- A student at Memorial University required assistance in dealing with the sexist and racist comments of a university professor.

It is important to put forward these challenges in a manner which makes it clear where the Council stands while opening doors to pursuing discussions with government officials. This women’s community expects the Advisory

- A woman called who had a restraining order on her abusive partner to say that he was harassing her and her calls to the police were unanswered.
- A woman called needing to get to a shelter or transition house, but afraid to go for fear that Child Protection Services would take her children when the years of abuse were disclosed.

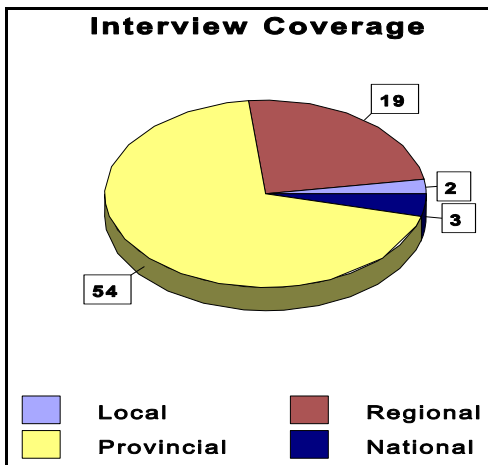
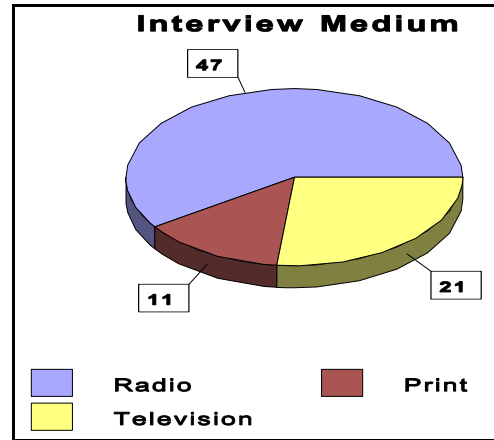
XIII Media

The President, as the “public face” of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, is responsible for the proactive and reactive media work. An important component of the Council’s work is to advocate and educate on matters pertaining to the social, legal, cultural, economic and political equality of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, with limited resourcing there are few opportunities to undertake educational campaigns. Therefore, working to put forward a strong feminist critique of issues, whether a challenge to government direction, or a comment on a public concern, is vital to asserting what is often a very different view of an issue.

Media work is where the arms-length, independent status of this Advisory Council is the most obvious. There are times when the position of the Council is in opposition with the position of government.

Council President to bring out a feminist critique of government direction and yet it is important to maintain open dialogue with government Ministers. This is the difficult balancing act for the Council President,

deciding when to challenge and when to dialogue and to articulate the advice on issues which are drawn from the Advisory Council Board and the broader women's community. The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is always made aware whenever the Provincial Advisory Council is taking issue with the government in case the Minister is asked to respond to the criticism of the Advisory Council.



**Total time commitment recorded:
88.28 hours**

The Advisory Council Staff is familiar with Staff at all of the media outlets and the President makes her contact information available whether in the office or at home. The work to maintain a strong media presence is constant, and when the Council is taking a proactive stand on an issue all Staff are involved, from the researching, writing, editing, and fielding of

calls to preparing and providing interviews. The Community Liaison/Communications Director shares the media information on positions taken by the Advisory Council on issues, or the reaction of the Council President, with equality-seeking women's organizations to assist them with a shared analysis on a provincial issue.

However, we have statistically and anecdotally recorded seventy-nine interviews with the Advisory Council President for the period ending March 31, 2003. This includes television, radio, and print and issues covered locally, regionally, provincially and nationally.

Examples of the issues addressed through the media by the Advisory Council during this period:

- ***The provincial budget continues to fund the Violence Prevention Initiative and regional anti-violence work.***
It is always important to provide funding for grassroots, anti-violence work, but it is equally important for government departments to institute policies and legislation which address the prevention of violence or the results of violence.
- ***Child pornography.***
We need to see child pornography in the context of pornography and violence directed at women and children.
- ***Voisey's Bay announcement.***
The Advisory Council noted concerns such as the impact on women and families who live along the North Coast of Labrador. In addition, the Council

The office of the Advisory Council continues to collect statistical and anecdotal information on the media work we undertake each year. Because of time constraints we are not always able to record the information on the number of media interviews, especially those given by the President when she is working in another part of the province.

raised issues about women's place in the plan for development and hoped that the provincial government would be asking for a gender as well as an equity plan.

- ***Appeal of the murder conviction of a man who killed a woman.***
The Advisory Council noted how difficult this is on the family and how our legal system does not address the seriousness of violence against women. The Council President asserted that women are losing faith in these legal processes ("legal outs") which are an emotional roller coaster for months and years leaving women frustrated.
- ***Woman's claims of violent sexual abuse are false.***
The Advisory Council's response noted that most sexual violence allegations are real and that police and others should not use this incident to become disillusioned and less vigorous in investigating any report of sexual / physical violence. The Council agreed that charges should be laid, but this is not a crime deserving incarceration; instead it is a mental health issue.
- ***Launch of Women in Science and Engineering handbook, Becoming***

Leaders.

The Council President noted that this handbook is an important tool, not merely for assisting women to take their rightful place in leadership, but for challenging the structures of industry to become more welcoming of women and the values women bring to

➤ ***Second woman makes a false claim of sexual assault.***

The Advisory Council worries that women will not be believed when they report violence and sexual abuse. As well, the Council President noted that false allegations are very unusual as most women and girls who are sexually or physically violated do not ever report.

➤ ***Appointment of new Newfoundland and Labrador Lieutenant Governor.***

The Council congratulated the new Lieutenant Governor, but offered that it was time that a woman was appointed, noting the new energy brought to the Governor General's position by the experience and perspective of a woman.

➤ ***25th Anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.***

The Council President spoke at the media conference about the invaluable work of this feminist organization. She also challenged men to support the work of sexual violence prevention with financial assistance and by challenging other men to understand. In addition, the President challenged the provincial government to provide annual funding to enable the Centre to offer support to victims of sexual

the workplace.

violence throughout the province.

➤ ***Justice Minister to discuss conditional sentencing at a federal / provincial / territorial meeting of Justice Ministers and senior officials.***

The Advisory Council wondered how the Minister could bring our provincial perspective to this issue when he has not consulted with women's groups, victims or advocacy organizations prior to attending this meeting.

➤ ***The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place In Canada begins its consultation.***

The Advisory Council noted that women were not attending the sessions and there has to be a strategy to ensure that women feel included and our voices and experiences used to shape the final report.

➤ ***New Human Resources and Employment legislation introduced in the House of Assembly.***

The Advisory Council praised the spirit of the legislation, but noted concerns with this department moving further and further away from dealing with poverty and the holistic needs of people at very vulnerable times. Prevention / early intervention work cannot be accomplished when clients are hardly seen by front-line workers any more.

Changing the name of the Department of Social Services to the Department of Human Resources and Employment, will not change the fact that people need social services.

➤ ***National event to commemorate the provinces assistance following the September 11th attacks on the USA.***

➤ ***Women's participation in the upcoming provincial election.***

The Council President stated that one of the challenges for 2004 will be getting women's issues on the political agenda for the provincial election. Political parties will need to be challenged to recruit women and have them run in winnable seats. It would be great if following the next provincial election we surpass the eight women elected, five in Cabinet, which exists today.

➤ ***Low sentence by judge for a man who killed his infant child.***

The Advisory Council feels that although a period of incarceration is appropriate, the reality will be that men who commit this crime will be returning to other relationships. There is a real need for programs while incarcerated, long term parole and probationary periods with mandatory programs available in the community to deal with men who abuse women and children.

➤ ***Changes expected with the federal divorce legislation.***

The Advisory Council is concerned with any move to a presumption of joint parenting. In this province we are still struggling with the basics such as

The Advisory Council noted the lack of women represented in the official celebration in Ottawa and responded that it is insulting to have only men profiled. Much of the hands-on work to care for the stranded passengers was done by women.

fair access to legal representation in contested custody and access disputes and other family law matters.

➤ ***Woman abandoned in a field; Royal Canadian Mounted Police state that wife abuse is seasonal.***

The Advisory Council President took exception to the comment about this being a seasonal issue. Men do not abuse because of alcohol or a lack of money for Christmas shopping. Instead, she noted, we need to examine the conditional sentencing for heinous crimes against women which tells men that woman abuse is not a serious issue.

➤ ***The reopening of Libra House.***

The Advisory Council stated that this was great news, but cautioned that there is much to do to ensure strong community support for this Transition House and adequate resourcing for the provincial umbrella organization which assists Transition Houses and Shelters.

➤ ***Man with forty charges of domestic violence released on bail.***

The Advisory Council challenged

community groups to speak out against this. Once again the message from the courts is that violence against women is not a serious issue.

➤ ***Advisory Council launches Feminism: Our Basis of Unity.***

The Advisory Council noted that the dual role of Women's Councils/Centres

➤ ***Libra Transition House closed following Board resignations.***

The Advisory Council noted that, as we reflect on the memory of December 6th and the 1989 Montreal Massacre, we cannot afford to lose any services for victims of violence.

➤ ***The need for a new Royal Commission on the Status of Women.***

The Advisory Council President, along with the Chair of the other provincial/territorial Advisory Councils, is calling for a revisiting of the 1971 Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council feels that the mechanisms that connect the federal Status of Women Minister to equality issues in the provinces and territories is not sufficient for moving an equality agenda forward.

trying to provide services, as well as advocating for equality is difficult. This tool, *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*, represents nine months of work with rural women's organizations to provide some practical advice for women's equality groups to connect with feminist principles and processes.

Director. It is through the Council's constant communication with equality-seeking women's organizations and other groups throughout our province who work on similar issues that we are able to provide advice and advocate on issues of equality and inclusion.

The Newfoundland and Labrador women's listserv is moderated by the Advisory Council's Community Liaison/Communications Director. This listserv is becoming a wonderful communication tool where women are posting information, personal experience, strategies, challenges and critique on issues which affect women's equality and inclusion. There are more than two hundred women who connect using the Advisory Council listserv. The Council is able to hear the thoughts and concerns of women beyond the organized women's movement and to increase our knowledge about the issues which need to be brought to the attention of government Ministers.

The Advisory Council's Secretary/Bookkeeper has become an expert at using computer technology as a method of communication with women and women's organizations. She is able to troubleshoot the computers at the Advisory Council office, as well as maintain our web site. This web site is now an interactive tool which receives dozens of communications daily. We now have a database which is updated weekly

XIV Communications / Writing

The Provincial Advisory Council is expected to be a provincial voice for women on equality issues. However, with only three permanent Staff and a provincial mandate this is a huge challenge. With no policy analyst/researcher on Staff, the work of writing, facilitating and communicating is taken on by the President and Community Liaison/Communications

with the latest information on individual women and women's organizations working on issues relating to equality, equity and inclusion.

The Advisory Council continues to be proactive in responding to women's groups both in the city of St. John's and in the rural areas of our province. The President and Community Liaison/Communications Director accept invitations to speak, present and The Board of the Advisory Council is grateful to Staff and their ability to multitask and work as a team, especially as it relates to the work of communicating with women and women's organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Two key pieces of work produced in-house by the Advisory Council Staff include *Women's History Month 2003* and *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity*.

Women's History Month

In the early fall of 2002, the Board and Staff of the Advisory Council, noting the importance of Women's History Month, began to look for ways to include the participation of more women in acknowledging and celebrating women's contributions. Women's History Month represents an opportunity to highlight the past and present contributions of women to Canadian society and to recognize the achievements of women from all walks of life as a vital part of the history of our province and country. Since 1992, the federal government has announced themes and activities through the Status of Women department to celebrate Women's History Month. The month of October was selected because of the historical significance of the 1929 Persons Case which represents a landmark victory in the struggle of Canadian women for equality.

October 2002 saw a flurry of activity at the

facilitate. This work is time consuming, but essential if we are to have a provincial presence. The President and Community Liaison/Communications Director write all of their presentations, keynote addresses, workshops, as well as our newsbulletins, media releases, briefs and reports. The Council's Secretary/Bookkeeper types and formats all of our original work.

Advisory Council involving the talent of all staff. Nearly one hundred contemporary and historical facts were researched and verified as the Advisory Council prepared to launch a *Women's Herstory Contest*. Using our listserv, to which more than two hundred women subscribe, our electronic, voice and regular mail, we posed a question per day during the month of October. Women were given twenty-four hours to respond and from the correct answers a winner was drawn. Dozens of women attempted the questions everyday providing our contest moderator simple answers to details long forgotten.

Following the October contest the questions and answers, as well as additional information, were compiled into a thirty-three page booklet and distributed to over five hundred women and women's organizations throughout the province. The information has been uploaded to the Advisory Council's website making it available to hundreds of women who are looking to inform themselves about women and women's equality work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Feminism: Our Basis of Unity

The Advisory Council work, from the development to the writing of this discussion guide, was truly a collective process. We were able to work with the Master of Women's Studies program of Memorial University, the

Status of Women Canada Women's Program, who funded the Newfoundland and Labrador Ad Hoc Committee of Equality-Seeking Organizations, the outgoing Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and the Status of Women Councils in the rural regions of the province.

The journey to the production of *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* has been a very full nine month process. Since 1996, the Advisory Council was concerned that feminism and the common understandings of feminism which guide and unite their work was being overwhelmed by the survival issues of project work, service delivery and supporting individual women to deal with issues of poverty and violence. Women's groups were no longer able to take time to develop their Boards and volunteers by using feminist processes, practices and principles.

The book is intended as a discussion guide for women and organizations involved or interested in equality-seeking work. It contains information and tools informed by decades of women's experiences as feminism and feminist organizers. It is provided as a challenge and a tool to help women's organizations to find ways to discuss, listen, teach and learn from one another. The book is not an authority on feminism or feminist organizing, but is intended to be a mentoring tool for sparking discussion and facilitating workshops which are participatory and inclusive. It also assists women to demystify feminism and examine ways to use feminism as a basis of unity for work on women's equality.

The work contains the definition of thirteen feminist principles to assist in building active, healthy processes, practices and principles within our equality-seeking organizations. It

Council has been hearing from equality-seeking Women's Councils, Transition Houses and groups of women working to build and maintain healthy organizations. They were challenged by their role as service providers and equality advocates.

provides an introduction to the meaning of feminism and the feminist movement within the context of equality-seeking organizations.

Feminism is the basis of unity for the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women and our organizational experiences are used to guide this work. The resource also contains tools to guide organizations in understanding feminism and demonstrates how to use feminist principles, processes and practices in building a basis of unity.

This work also demonstrates an excellent use of Board and Staff resources. It reflects the decades of experience of the Advisory Council President and Board, the grassroots women's organizations throughout the province and the inestimable skills of our Staff in research, facilitating, writing, and formatting. In fact, the Advisory Council's Community Liaison/Communications Director, Michelle Smith, who is the author of this publication has presented this process and product as the first

ever field-based internship in the Masters in Women's Studies Programme at Memorial University.

The Advisory Council was please to distribute this work to hundreds of individual women and women's organizations both provincially and nationally as a tool for provoking discussion and reawakening women to the basis of equality-seeking work ~ **Feminism!**

Feminist Principles Defined

Accountability: The feminist principle of accountability means we hold ourselves responsible to the women we work for and with in our pursuit of equality and inclusion. We are accountable through our practice of feminist principles and our commitment to feminism as our basis of unity.

Advocacy: The feminist principle of advocacy means supporting or recommending a position or course of action that has been informed by women's experiences in our efforts to bring about equality and inclusion. Advocacy may take place through a variety of actions and strategies, ranging from demonstrations and protests to meetings and dialogue.

Challenge and Conflict: The feminist principle of challenge and conflict means that we accept conflict as inevitable while embracing challenge as the practice of calling into account, questioning, provoking thought, and reflecting. When we are committed to respectful ways of challenging and healthy conflict resolution processes, we deepen our individual and collective understanding.

Choice: The principle of choice means that we respect, support and advocate for women's individual and collective right to make our own decisions about our bodies, our families, our jobs and our lives. The right to choose is integral to the feminist pursuit of social, legal, political, and economic equality for women.

Consultation: The feminist principle of consultation means working collaboratively, seeking guidance and sharing information in developing strategies and actions to advance women's equality.

Diversity: The feminist principle of diversity means that we respect, accept and celebrate our individual and collective differences as women, including those based on age, race, culture, ability, sexuality, geography, religion, politics, class, education and image, among others.

Educations and Mentoring: The feminist principle of education and mentoring means creating opportunities to guide, counsel, coach, tutor and teach each other. Constantly sharing our skills, knowledge, history and understanding makes our organizations healthier and more effective in our pursuit of equality and inclusion.

Equality and Inclusion: The feminist principle of equality and inclusion means, as feminist organizations, we apply a feminist analysis to policies, programs, practices, services and legislation to ensure they are inclusive of women and other marginalized groups. We advocate for equity practices to eliminate the barriers to inclusion, recognizing that inclusion leads to equality.

Evaluation: The feminist principle of evaluation means taking the time to reflect upon whether we are achieving what we set out to do as well as how we are going about it. Evaluation presents an opportunity to examine the work that we do and the feminist principles, practices and processes that guide and inform this work.

Joy and Celebration: The feminist principle of joy and celebration means that we honour each other and our work through sharing joy and celebrating our commitment to woman-centred, feminist principles, practices and processes.

Leadership: The feminist principle of leadership means embracing and sharing the skills and knowledge of individual women and providing opportunities for women to develop their leadership potential. As feminist organizations, we invest power and trust in our leaders with the expectation they will draw upon feminist practices and processes in our efforts toward equality and inclusion.

Power Sharing: The feminist principle of power sharing means we are committed to creating balanced power relationships through democratic practices of shared leadership, decision-making, authority, and responsibility.

Safety: The feminist principle of safety means we are committed, as women and organizations, to creating environments where all women feel comfortable and safe to participate in our work toward equality. We build safety through healthy practices of inclusion, respect, self-care and confidentiality.