
2003-2004 Annual Report

President's Message

This Annual Report covers a period of change for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. We began the year with a new Board, a new Status of Women Minister and new Staff at the Women's Policy Office. As an Advisory Council we had just completed a major initiative with our launch of *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* and we were confident that as an Advisory Council we were moving in a direction within our role to advocate, educate and advise which women in Newfoundland and Labrador approved of and felt connected to.

We felt certain that a provincial election was imminent in 2003. However, the Advisory Council was not convinced that the Liberal administration of that day, or the Progressive Conservative official opposition, understood or fully endorsed an agenda for women's equality and equity. The Advisory Council Board and Staff undertook a series of meetings, conference calls and focus sessions with women and women's organizations who shared our concerns with the upcoming election and the condition of women's social and economic inequality. A *Women's Election Guide* was developed and written by the Advisory Council Staff, and more than 4500 copies were distributed throughout the province.

As was predicted, the fourteen years of a Liberal government ended and a new Progressive Conservative administration began its term. It was wonderful to see women's political representation peak; thirty women ran for political office and ten were elected. Four women were appointed to Cabinet, and three former women Cabinet Ministers were re-elected to the opposition along with three additional Members of the House of Assembly. With such a strong representation of women, 2003 ended with the hope that women in Newfoundland and Labrador could expect to see advancement on issues of equality, equity and inclusion.

Early in 2004, and by the end of the fiscal year, our hopes were dashed and reality settled upon us. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador became aware that government had a fiscally driven agenda, and we knew with absolute certainty that a fiscally driven agenda will continue to harm women, families and communities. All of this came at the end of a difficult decade for women throughout our country. The United Nations had issued a strong condemnation of Canada and criticized the provinces/territories and our country for the high rates of poverty among women.

As this report is delivered to the House of Assembly, our new Premier is challenging the federal government to deliver on a deal which will see the fiscal situation of Newfoundland and Labrador improve considerably. The concern from women's equality-seeking organizations is whether the provincial government will continue with its fiscally driven agenda or listen to the concerns of women and equality-seeking women's organizations. These concerns have been articulated by the Advisory Council for months and we are ever hopeful that the Premier and Government will begin to demonstrate the commitment to equality stated in the March 2004 *Speech from the Throne*:

My Government is renewing its commitment to address this and other issues of special concern to women in order for our people to share equitably in the social and economic benefits of our province, irrespective of their gender. My Government will work to ensure women's voices are heard and women's needs are addressed.

As President of the Advisory Council, my Board, Staff and I continue to advise government on the state of women's equality, support efforts which improve the status of women and challenge policy, legislation or direction which may prove harmful to the advancement of women's social, economic, cultural, political or legal equality.

Joyce M Hancock

I Letter of Transmittal

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

Dear Minister Burke,

On behalf of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Newfoundland and Labrador, I am pleased to present to you our Annual Report covering the period April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004. We have included as well highlights from the Council's audited financial report to complement the narrative and more descriptive elements of our work.

This report encompasses a full year of working with you and your government to advance, advocate, support and challenge on issues which affect women's social, legal, cultural, economic and political equality in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Respectfully,

Joyce M. Hancock
President

II The Status of Women Ministry

The Status of Women Ministry is comprised of both an internal agency, the Women's Policy Office, and an external agency, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

The internal agency, the Women's Policy Office, works with government departments and agencies to identify and analyze the issues and to assist with the development of policies, programs and legislation that benefit women. It monitors and evaluates existing and proposed legislation, policies and programs to determine the impact on women, maintains a close working relationship with federal, provincial and territorial counterparts and participates in intergovernmental working groups.

The external agency, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, is the arms-length, legislated body that is connected to individual women and equality-seeking women's organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The Advisory Council monitors government action, provides independent advice and advocates on behalf of women and equality-seeking organizations in the province.

The Council uses its strong connection to women's groups to provide information and analysis to Government about the differing impacts of programs, policies, services and legislation on women, families and communities.

Although women and women's equality-seeking organizations are unrestrained in their efforts to influence equality issues there is much concentrated collaboration between them and the department and organizations set up to pursue equality for Newfoundland and Labrador women. The Advisory Council makes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women aware of equality issues brought to its attention by individual women and women's groups and provides information and analysis about those issues. The Minister is then able, through the Women's Policy Office, to use the information provided by the independent Provincial Advisory Council to direct additional research and analysis and, hopefully, push for changes and improvements in department and government direction which negatively impacts on women, families and communities.

III About the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women

What The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women is an independent organization with a mandate to advise, advocate and educate on matters pertaining to the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. 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.

Who The Council consists of an eleven-woman Board of Directors, including a President / CEO and Vice President, who are appointed for a three-year term. The President / CEO's position is salaried and she works to maintain an everyday presence on issues of women's equality and inclusion. In 1996, the Board was restructured to include members nominated by grassroots equality-seeking women's councils in Newfoundland and Labrador. Throughout the 2002-03 period, the Council worked with women's equality-seeking groups, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women's Policy Office to develop feminist criteria for future appointment to the Board of Directors. These criteria ensure that Board members have knowledge of women's equality issues, are connected to the provincial women's community, and are able to reflect women's everyday realities and experiences in communities and regions throughout the province. Along with the President / CEO, a Community Liaison / Communications Director and a Secretary / Bookkeeper support the everyday work of the Advisory Council.

Why The Council recognizes that women's equality and inclusion are essential to the decision making which guides the direction of our organizations, communities and province. However, women are still not equal in our society and, despite the advances of recent decades, violence and gender discrimination are pervasive. The Council uses its strong connection to women's groups to provide information and analysis to Government about the differing impacts of programs, policies, services and legislation on women, families and communities.

When The Advisory Council was established in 1980 by the government of the day, and received legislative standing with the introduction of the *Status of Women Advisory Council Act*. Throughout its history, Council Board and Staff have worked with Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and interested Members of the House of Assembly from all political parties to advance the status of women throughout the province.

How The Advisory Council advises, advocates, lobbies and educates on issues affecting the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. This work is accomplished by using the information and analysis of the Board, the skills of Staff and the sharing of strategies with other women's equality / equity organizations. The Council works 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-centred environment.

Where The Advisory Council home is located in St. John's where two-day Board meetings are held quarterly. Council Staff are accessible by phone, fax and email and are available to meet with community and government representatives.

A. Mandate, Vision and Mission

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women is legislated by the Lieutenant - Governor in Council to:

- Advise the minister on those matters relating to the status of women that the Advisory Council feels appropriate;
- Advise the minister on those matters relating to the status of women that the minister refers to the advisory council for consideration;
- Bring before Government and the public matters of interest and concern to women;
- Establish the general policies that will govern the organization, administration and operation of the advisory council (*Status of Women Advisory Council Act*, RSNL 1990, Chapter 25).

Our Vision:
Equality, equity and inclusion for women in
Newfoundland and Labrador.

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.

Our Mission:

To provide for Newfoundland and Labrador women and women's equity-seeking groups an organization which works for the social, cultural, economic, legal and political equality of women.

Throughout its twenty-four year history, the Board and Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council have worked with Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and interested Members of the House of Assembly to advance women's equality throughout the province.

Since many Federal Government decisions impact on women, families and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Advisory Council works as well on national concerns which affect the status of women.

The Advisory Council 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 Provincial 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 full-time Staff positions. These cuts left the agency unable to adequately fulfill its legislated mandate.

At the time the Board was also restructured to include members nominated by seven of the equality-seeking feminist organizations in the province. This process was used again in 1999, and eight of the province's equality-seeking organizations were invited to nominate women to serve a three-year term 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 2002-03 period, the Advisory Council Board built upon this process by working with women's equality-seeking groups, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women's Policy Office to develop formal criteria for appointment to the Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

B. Values

As an equality-seeking organization, the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women works from a feminist perspective to advocate for women's full and equal participation in all aspects of society. As the Council responds to the equality concerns of women in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Board and Staff must feel connected to a shared vision and values. The Advisory Council 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.

The Advisory Council Board is committed to creating a woman-centred environment and having clearly defined values is the underpinning of this way of working. 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:

1. To be a feminist is to assert our equal value as women in a society that too often undervalues our worth, contributions and experiences.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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).
12. To be a feminist is to take our agenda for women's equality and inclusion into every meeting, regardless of the structured agenda.
13. 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.
14. To be a feminist is to learn about women's history and the history of the women's movement.

C. Model of Governance

The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women consists of an eleven-woman Board of Directors, including a President / CEO and Vice President, who are appointed for a three-year term. The President / CEO's position is salaried, and she works to maintain an everyday presence on issues of women's equality and inclusion throughout the province. Along with the President / CEO, a Community Liaison / Communications Director and a Secretary / Bookkeeper support the Advisory Council's everyday work.

i Advisory Council Board

The present Board of the Advisory Council is comprised of women who live and work in different communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, with three members from Labrador.

Board members have a broad range of experience working from an equality perspective and are connected to grassroots equality-seeking women's organizations. All of the Board members consider themselves to be 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 women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Advisory Council Board meets quarterly for two-day meetings. The Advisory Council President / CEO chairs the meetings, the Vice President serves as the Finance Chair, the Central member serves as the Personnel Chair and a St. John's member is a Signing Officer. Other Board members work with the President / CEO when she is providing outreach in the member's region.

Board Members

The 2003-2006 Board members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women are:

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

Board Criteria

The following criteria, principles and nomination process have been adopted and used by the provincial government in the appointment of the current Board of Directors of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Throughout the 2002-03 period, the Council worked with women's equality-seeking groups, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women's Policy Office to develop feminist criteria for future appointment to the Provincial Advisory Council Board of Directors. Prior to 1996 Board members were simply appointed by the government of the day without any requirement that women have experience or knowledge on issues of equality and equity. The formal criteria ensure Advisory Council Board members have knowledge of women's equality issues, are connected to the provincial women's community and are able to reflect women's everyday realities and experiences throughout the province.

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 their 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;
- Women should be comfortable working 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.

Principles for Composition of the Board

When determining appointments to the Board of the Advisory Council, every consideration is given to the principles of equality and equity in the overall composition of the Board. These include:

- 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.

Process for Nominations to the Board

The Minister Responsible for the Status of Women seeks written nominations to the Board of the Advisory Council from:

- 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, economic, political, cultural 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.
- Members of the House of Assembly.

Review of Nominations

Following the nominations process, the Minister meets with a committee of the Advisory Council, including the outgoing / reappointed President / CEO, to review these nominations prior to making the appointments. The purpose of this review is to ensure the criteria have been met.

& Advisory Council Staff

A three-woman Staff carry out the everyday work of the Provincial Advisory Council.

During the 1996 government exercise of program review, the Advisory Council Staff composition was reduced from five to three full-time positions. We lost our Executive Director and Policy Analyst / Researcher. The work of the Provincial Advisory Council would not be possible without the passion and commitment of three women who take on multiple tasks in ensuring that the organization continues as a provincial body. These women now attempt to carry out the duties of five positions.

Since the 1996 program review, subsequent Boards and Staff have endeavored to sustain the work and presence of the Council throughout the province. Prior to every quarterly Board meeting a full Staff report covering a three-month period, as well as statistical and narrative media reports and statistical crisis / information call reports, are provided to all Board members. These reports are reviewed by the Board and discussed during Board meetings to ensure that the everyday work is in keeping with the Council's mandate and direction.

Weekly Staff meetings, the continuous sharing of responsibility and a commitment to working to create a woman-centered environment within the Advisory Council office allow Staff to work at an optimal level.

The 2003 -2004 Staff of the Advisory Council were:

- & President / CEO - Joyce Hancock
- & Community Liaison / Communications Director - Michelle Smith
- & Secretary / Bookkeeper - Melanie Parsons
- & Summer Student - Amber Milley

iii Accountability

Although the Advisory Council has no formal connection to equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, there exists a strong everyday, informal connection. The Council does not decide the issues or strategic priorities for the organized women's community. Instead, the Council takes the information, analysis and experience from women, seeks additional information from the Board and women's groups in other regions and, in keeping with our legislated mandate, moves the issue forward in the form of public education, advocacy, lobbying or advising the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

It continues to be a strong ethical value of the Advisory Council that we hold ourselves accountable to the women of Newfoundland and Labrador we work for and with in the pursuit of equality, equity and inclusion. We are accountable through our practice of feminist principles and processes and our commitment to feminism as our basis of unity.

The Advisory Council is accountable in all of our practices to:

- Government for its fiscal resourcing of our organization;
- equality-seeking feminist and anti-violence organizations with whom we share a common equality / equity agenda;
- the women in Newfoundland and Labrador who deserve an equal voice in the decisions made which affect and impact upon families and communities;
- the Board and Staff of our organization for using a feminist empowerment model within our meetings, decision-making processes and everyday work.

iv Stakeholders

There are numerous equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations the Advisory Council considers to be sister and / or partner organizations in our work to eradicate violence, inequality, and exclusion. These include:

- Status of Women Councils
- Women's Centres
- Shelters
- Transition Houses
- Women In Resource Development Committee
- Regional Coordinating Coalitions Against Violence
- Family Resource Centres
- Women's Institutes
- Women's Policy Office
- Women's Studies Program, Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Other community-based anti-violence and equality-seeking organizations
- National / international women's organizations

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women also meets and consults regularly with government departments, agencies and / or Ministers on an ongoing basis to provide gender analysis, assess the impacts of government decision making on women, families and communities, and recommend policies, programs, services or legislation to improve the status of women.

v Operational Principles

The following operational principles were developed over a twelve-year period and accepted by the Board and Staff of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

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.

Education 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.

IV The Work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Despite the challenges faced by the Board and the three-woman Staff due to inadequate resources, the organization continues its work fulfilling a provincial legislated mandate in the following six focused areas:

Advising / Advocating / Lobbying

The President / CEO 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 / CEO meets with departmental Ministers and senior officials to discuss issues impacting on women's equality and equity.

This work has proven successful because a relationship of trust develops between the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Advisory Council President / CEO. 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 and its connection to the women's community, rather than a shared agenda for departmental direction. The role of the Council in advising, advocating and lobbying is often cited as a demonstration of 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.

Consultation and Collaboration

Consultation is accomplished in several ways. A particular government department may undertake policy or legislative changes and wish to discuss these with women. The Advisory Council will draw together a group of women in different regions and participate with these women in providing information and experiences regarding how proposed changes will affect women, families and communities.

Sometimes organized women's groups wish to meet with Ministers and senior departmental officials and the President / CEO 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 / CEO 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.

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 / CEO 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. There are also opportunities to learn first-hand about issues of concern to women who are often experiencing inequality.

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 / CEO of the Advisory Council spends a great deal of her time offering a feminist perspective on "issues of the day" both in a reactive and pro-active way as a strategy to keeping women's equality issues on the public agenda.

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.

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, news bulletins, moderate a listserv and an interactive web site, 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.

V The Status of Women in Newfoundland and Labrador

The Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women recognizes that women's equality and inclusion are essential to the decision making which guides the direction of our organizations, communities and province. However, women are still not equal in our society and, despite the advances of recent decades, violence and gender discrimination are pervasive in many dimensions of life worldwide.

Unfolding social and economic circumstances have, in many respects, different impacts on men and women. 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 . . . *Governments at all levels must work more diligently to ensure that women's values, experiences, knowledge and skills are better reflected in policy formation* (Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada, 2003a, p. 144).

Labour Market and Income

Women's continued inequality and exclusion is certainly evident in many areas of life in this province and country. While more women now participate in the labour market, they are more likely to be employed in part-time, temporary or seasonal employment without long-term security, health benefits or pension plans. Women also continue to be clustered in lower-paying, traditionally female-dominated sectors, such as retail, and are vastly under-represented in technology and resource sectors (Hussey, 2003).

While incomes are rising in Newfoundland and Labrador, they remain lower than the rest of Canada. Over the last decade, provincial per capita income has consistently been about 25% lower than Canada as a whole. The lowest income earners in the province and, consequently, those most vulnerable to poverty, violence, and further exclusion, are women. In 1998, 31% of women working in full-time, full-year jobs earned only \$15,000 or less, compared with 16% of men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003). In contrast, of the highest income earners, only 1% of women earned over \$75,000, compared with 5% of men. One quarter (25%) of women earned \$35,000, compared with nearly half (45%) of men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003).

Education Participation

More women are attending university in the province than men, but they are still clustered in traditionally female-dominated programs. Women received 61% of undergraduate degrees in 2002, and 52% of graduate degrees. However, women are most likely to graduate in the Arts, primarily Sociology, English or Psychology. Men are most likely to receive Science degrees, usually in Biology or Computer Science (Strategic Social Plan, 2003).

In 2002, women comprised six percent of those working in trade-related occupations, 14 percent in occupations unique to primary industry and 19 percent in natural and applied sciences (Women's Policy Office, 2003).

The gender wage gap also remains quite large. In 1960, women in this province earned 51.3% of men's earnings. Now, forty years later, women still earn only 62.7% of men's earnings (Hussey, 2003). In fact, the gap between high and low incomes is becoming larger in general. In 1999, the gap between people with high and low incomes was larger than in 1990, widening income inequality (Strategic Social Plan, 2003).

Family Status and Poverty

Poverty is a key concern for women, families and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Women primarily head single parent families and, although the number of children in the province has declined by 30% since 1991, the number of children - and women - living in poverty has not declined at the same rate. During the 1990's about half of all single-parent families were living in poverty. In 1991, women headed over 82% of lone parent families. In 2001, the number of lone parent families had increased, with women still heading 82% (Women's Policy Office, 2003). Women also form the majority of individuals who do the unpaid work of childcare, senior care and housework.

In 2002, women headed over 92% of single parent families in subsidized housing (Women's Policy Office, 2003). Nationally, 56% of single parent families headed by women are poor, compared with 24% for men (Morris, 2002). 41% of single women under 65 live in poverty, while 49% of single women seniors are poor.

Violence

Poverty puts women at increased risk of family violence, as lack of economic security and independence often prevents escape from abusive living situations. Women who experience violence within the home often have two choices: violence or poverty. Either "choice" will mean deepened inequality and further vulnerability to violence.

According to the Violence Prevention Initiative of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2002), the following are distressing indicators of women dealing with violence in our province:

- In 2001, 1,282 women and children were admitted to shelters for abused women.
- In that same year, these shelters received 2,625 crisis calls directly related to abuse.
- An environmental scan of sexual and reproductive health in the Atlantic provinces published by Health Canada in April 1999 stated that reported sexual assaults are nearly twice as frequent in Newfoundland and Labrador as in the rest of the country.
- In 1999, almost all victims of sexual assault in Newfoundland and Labrador were women.
- In a 2001 survey, Newfoundland and Labrador had a 39% higher incidence of sexual assaults reported to police than the national average.
- In 2000, women made up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault (86%) and other types of sexual offences (78%).

- Rates of spousal homicide among Aboriginal women are more than eight times higher than for non-Aboriginal women.
- Only 10% of sexual assaults on women are reported to the police. Extrapolating from these data, there are 509,860 sexual assaults in Canada per year, or 1,397 per day. This means that every minute of every day, a woman or child in Canada is being sexually assaulted (Violence Prevention Initiative, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2002).

Violence and inequality is expensive, and the costs can be measured in both human and economic terms. Billions of dollars are spent in this province and country each and every year on the aftermath of the violence against women alone, while the organizations who have the knowledge and ability to provide cost-effective equality-seeking / anti-violence services, advocacy and education remain undervalued and underfunded:

- A 1995 study showed the total annual measurable health costs alone amounted to over \$1.5 billion (F/P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2003, p.23).
- A second study in 1995 estimated preliminary partial social services / education, criminal justice, labour / employment and health / medical costs of violence against women to be at least \$4.2 billion (F/P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2003, p.23).
- A third study estimated that, in British Columbia alone, the partial economic costs of violence against women were \$385 million and that with the addition of the missing costs of health care, child service, court costs and inter-generational effect, the total could approach \$1 billion per year (F/P/T Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, 2003, p.23).

Age

Demographic trends in Newfoundland and Labrador indicate that our population is ageing. Women tend to live longer than men; in 1999, life expectancy was 80.2 years for women, compared with 75.2 years for men (Strategic Social Plan, 2003). The implications for women's equality will become increasingly evident as the population ages, given that women tend to live longer than men, to head single-parent families, to obtain precarious employment and to live with poverty and violence.

The number of older women admitted to Newfoundland and Labrador shelters each year is growing. Some of these women have lived with violence in their relationships for more than 50 years (Karen Bishop, Provincial Association Against Family Violence, 2002).

The work to improve the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador will be of increasingly critical importance in the years ahead.

VI The Position of Provincial Government on the Status of Women

The following quotes from provincial government leaders provide a strong endorsement of the important role and work of the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Violence against women was very recently raised by the Honourable Ed Roberts, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador, in the *2004 Speech from the Throne* as a major issue which must be addressed:

Violence and the threat of violence, sadly, continues to be a major issue for many women in our province. My Government is renewing its commitment to address this and other issues of special concern to women in order for our people to share equitably in the social and economic benefits of our province, irrespective of their gender. My Government will work to ensure women's voices are heard and women's needs are addressed.

Our current Minister Responsible for Status of Women, the Honourable Joan Burke, endorsed the invaluable grassroots advocacy work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and women's centres and councils throughout the province in a March 2004 news release issued by Executive Council:

Although our province is financially challenged, government has committed to ensuring that women's voices are heard and women's needs are met. Government recognizes the important role played by the Provincial Advisory Council and the Status of Women Councils / Centres in the quest for social and economic equality for women in Newfoundland and Labrador. This commitment to additional funding...indicates government's confidence that these organizations represent smart investments in social programming...The advocacy work of these organizations is invaluable to government and to the communities they serve. Together, they provide a grassroots resource to understanding the challenges faced by women in this province. The workload is tremendous and that is why we felt that increased funding for the women's centres is important (Executive Council, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004).

The equality-seeking work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the organized women's community was also acknowledged by Progressive Conservative Leader - and now Premier - Danny Williams in a correspondence to the Advisory Council President / CEO in October of 2003:

The Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador supports the principles of equality and inclusion. We acknowledge the equality-seeking and anti-violence work of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, other women's councils, transition houses, shelters and anti-violence coalitions . . . The analysis provided by these organizations broadens our understanding of the challenges faced by women in our province and country. Issues of social and economic justice are provincial concerns and we will support and expand our partnerships with communities throughout the province in a collaborative effort to address these problems (Progressive Conservative Leader Danny Williams, October 16, 2003).

The Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada made several references and recommendations regarding gender and women's equality issues, including:

Women in the province made it clear to the Commission that their perspectives and experiences have not been taken sufficiently into account whether one looks at the fishery, the new economy, out-migration, volunteerism or decision-making (2003, p.48).

While the economic impact of out-migration is devastating, the social challenges in sustaining family and community life as the population decreases, especially in rural areas, are becoming overwhelming. In our struggle to address these challenges, it is critical that we understand the differing impacts on women and men, and that we build on the differing insights of both genders in finding an effective response (2003, p. 49).

The continuing barriers to the inclusion of women in decision-making in the province mean that women's experiences are not being considered when policies are being developed, that women's knowledge and skills are absent in assessing complex issues relating to the social and economic survival of the people of the province, and that one-half of the population are too often excluded when steps are taken to shape a new vision for our future. Among such barriers are the lack of accessible and affordable daycare, discriminatory attitudes about the knowledge and skills women possess, and a failure to understand the different needs, roles, life experiences and economic and social circumstances facing women and men (2003, p. 49).

...if women are to see themselves as valued, respected and included citizens of the province, stronger policies must be implemented to facilitate the inclusion of women in decision-making, improve women's access to training and education, improve gender equality in the workplace, encourage women as entrepreneurs and support women as they face daunting odds in the face of overwhelming out migration. These issues are not specific to our province. Therefore, the Commission supports those who are calling on the Government of Canada to revisit the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in order to pursue the improvements needed to ensure the full and equal participation of women in social, economic and political life in Canada. (2003, p. 49-50)

VII Strengths, Achievements and Challenges

Strengths and Achievements

The following is a listing of major strengths and achievements which “add value” to the Advisory Council’s provincial mandate to improve the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Media presence. The Advisory Council has developed and maintained a strong media presence provincially, regionally, locally and, on occasion, nationally. In the past three years, the President / CEO has conducted between ninety and one hundred and twenty interviews per year. This work is time consuming yet critical as a tool for profiling equality issues in the public arena. The President / CEO and Community Liaison / Communications Director are pro-active with media and refer media to individual women working on equality issues throughout the province. In addition, we provide assistance and analysis to women’s organizations who need to speak on a local issue.

Advisory Council’s links to equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations. The President / CEO and Community Liaison / Communications Director spend time daily in communication with local women’s organizations with whom we share a mutual equality-seeking agenda. Board members and Women’s Centre Coordinators look to the Advisory Council Staff for problem solving and assistance with healthy organizing, as well as information and critical thinking on how government direction impacts women, families and communities. Eight times per year the Advisory Council coordinates and chairs a conference call to allow established women’s organizations and emerging groups an opportunity to network, challenge one another on critical equality issues and provide timely information on how women are impacted by social and economic issues.

Criteria for Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women Board Appointments.

The Advisory Council worked for two years with grassroots feminist organizations, the Women's Policy Office and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to develop appropriate criteria for appointment to the Advisory Council Board of Directors. This process was an important step in recognizing the arms-length independent status of the Provincial Advisory Council. The criteria for consideration of appointment as the President / CEO and Board of the Advisory Council are now embedded in equality-seeking and feminist process with links to grassroots women's equality-seeking organizations.

Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Women's Election Guide. During the spring and summer of 2003, the Advisory Council President / CEO and Staff coordinated a number of conference calls and focus sessions with individual women and women representing organizations dealing with issues of social, economic, legal, cultural and political equality. There were in excess of seven hundred issues identified as important for women during the 2003 provincial election. The Advisory Council Staff researched the issues, wrote and published the *Election Guide*. With the assistance of a local union, seventeen hundred guides were distributed throughout the province. The guide was also downloaded from the Council's web site six hundred and forty times. All candidates received a copy of the publication and individual women and women's organizations throughout the province made use of the guide in discussions with local candidates.

Communications strategy. In the past three years, the Advisory Council President / CEO and Staff have moved to a technological strategy to maintain a presence and work with the provincial women's community. The Council's database has over eleven hundred contacts and must be maintained daily. The Council facilitates and moderates a listserv which provides a daily contact for approximately two hundred individual women and women's organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

This has become a forum for sharing information, providing feminist thinking and strategies and mobilizing on issues critical to women's equality. The Advisory Council has also developed a style of web-based communications. The web site is maintained and updated by Staff and consists of current information provided in an accessible style. The Advisory Council web site receives many visitors; in a two week period our *Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Election Guide* was downloaded over five hundred times. The Advisory Council's Secretary / Bookkeeper, who has developed an expertise in information technology, provides assistance in all aspects of computer use to women's organizations in St. John's and throughout the province.

Gender Inclusive Analysis. The President/CEO and Community Liaison/Communications Director play a leadership role in many organizations. The Council President / CEO is a founding member and Co-Chair of the Women In Resource Development Committee (WRDC). She was a member of the Strategic Social Plan Advisory Committee, serves on the Premier's Council on Social Policy and is a member of the Social Audit Committee. She also worked on the Human Resources and Employment legislation. The Community Liaison / Communications Director is a Board member of Women Interested in Successful Employment (WISE), an Executive Committee member of the St. John's Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence (Eastern Avalon) and a member of the Provincial Coordinating Committee (PCC) of the Violence Prevention Initiative. Both of these women provide feminist inclusive analysis to government and community consultations and working groups.

Outreach. The President / CEO and Staff work on a local level and through phone, conference calls and information technology to assist equality-seeking women's organizations. Dozens of workshops and information sessions are provided to provincial and local conferences, Memorial University students and College of the North Atlantic students. When time and travel dollars permit, the President / CEO travels to other communities to assist equality-seeking organizations with developing healthy organizational practices, as well as strategizing and mobilizing on local and regional equality issues.

Leadership. The President/CEO of the Advisory Council has been providing leadership and analysis to Cabinet Ministers, senior bureaucrats and government consultations for over seven years. She and the Board have developed working relationships with departmental Ministers and bureaucrats to advise and advocate on equality and inclusion. The President has worked with four Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women to support and challenge government direction. For the last three years she has co-chaired a Coalition of Provincial / Territorial Advisory Councils to bring a national profile to provincial and territorial equality issues. The Advisory Council has been working with the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) on the federal divorce legislation and the Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) to provide analysis and strategize on the international agreements which address issues of women's equality.

Women's History Month. During 2003 the Council researched, coordinated and moderated an online contest to profile the history of women's equality work in Newfoundland and Labrador. Throughout the month of October, a question was posed on the Council's listserv and web site. Dozens of individuals attempted to answer, and the following day a winner was chosen and the background to the issue explained in great detail. Through the promotion of the Women's History Month contest by the Department of Education and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association, high school students entered the contest and learned about women's past and contemporary contributions to history.

Challenges

The past seven and a half years have placed a tremendous burden on any woman who has worked at the Advisory Council. Since the Council is a provincially funded, legislated body it is not able to access project funding anywhere to assist in meeting its fiscal challenges.

We have only been able to accomplish so much because of the dedicated Staff who believe in the work of equality and inclusion and have been willing to take on multiple tasks. This is no longer acceptable and the Board of the Advisory Council requests the personnel and financial resources to do the job it has been mandated to do.

Due to current constraints around funding and staffing, the Advisory Council is unable to meet a number of identified needs. Our challenges include:

Outreach. The Advisory Council has a limited presence outside St. John's. Staff are not able to respond to requests from women's equality-seeking organizations, women's groups, colleges and university campuses. These requests range from invitations for workshops, sessions on feminist organizing and building healthy practices for equality-seeking work to addressing conferences and meetings. In the past year the Council has turned down 50-60 such requests.

Inability to attend provincial and national conferences. Due to limited travel dollars, the President / CEO and / or Staff cannot participate in these excellent fora for both bringing a gender inclusive analysis and learning what is happening in the provinces and territories around equality and anti-violence work.

Need for writing. Although Staff possess excellent writing skills (President / CEO and Community Liaison / Communications Director), there is inadequate time to provide briefs, news bulletins and other pieces of writing (for example, this Advisory Council did not present on the federal draft divorce legislation). The provincial women's community expects leadership from its Advisory Council, but we are unable to do the analysis and writing necessary to adequately fulfill this role.

Need for public education. The Advisory Council has a legislated mandate to provide public education on issues of equality. We are unable to adequately fulfill this role. We are missing many opportunities with politicians, boards, schools and committees to bring a strong gender inclusive analysis to the general public and to governance structures.

Improved Labrador presence. Although we have three Board members from Labrador, we are unable to meet any requests for a presence in Labrador regions or communities. In the past three years the Advisory Council has only been able to make three visits, although we received monthly requests for assistance with equality-seeking work.

Need for more analysis. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador expect this Advisory Council to have knowledge of provincial, national and international trends on issues of women's social and economic equality. This means devoting time and attention to researching, reading and analysis. We are always forced to choose between outreach and analysis and this is both unfair and unnecessary.

Need for leadership presence. We are constantly forced to turn down requests to provide leadership and gender inclusive analysis to committees, consultations and projects. Last year in the St. John's region alone we were forced to say no to every opportunity to speak at high schools. We are missing many opportunities to work with young people who are not being challenged or supported on issues of gender equality.

VIII Summary of Activities April 1, 2003 - March 31, 2004

A. Advisory Council Board

The Board of the Advisory Council meets quarterly and in this period three meetings took place in St. John's and one by conference call.

July 10 & 11, 2003	St. John's
October 2 & 3, 2003	St. John's
December 11, 2003	by Conference Call
February 5 & 6, 2004	St. John's

These quarterly meetings provide opportunities for the Board to share observations and concerns from women in their communities and regions. Because of the Advisory Council's strong connection to grassroots community-based feminist organizations there is time spent during our meetings informing the Board about the issues and initiatives of importance to these groups.

The Status of Women Minister has met with the Advisory Council Board during our quarterly meetings and the President of the Council has been available to provide information and analysis to the Minister on issues or initiatives undertaken by her government.

Between meetings members of the Advisory Council Board continue to be involved in the everyday work undertaken by the President and Staff. This is accomplished through telephone discussions and electronic mail. The Vice President serves as the Finance Chair and oversees the financial direction of the Council.

She works with the Council's Bookkeeper to ensure appropriate financial accountability. The Vice President works closely with the President to assist with strategic planning and direction. The Council Board member from Grand Falls-Windsor is serving as the Personnel Chair and works with the President to ensure that Staff issues are dealt with, including evaluations, hiring and workload. A Board member from St. John's serves as a signing officer and assists the President by attending key meetings and consultations when the President is working outside St. John's. All of the women serving the Board of the Advisory Council work with the President when she is in that member's region of the province.

B. Council Work

The Provincial Advisory Council Board took a decision at our February meeting to profile women's equality issues in the upcoming provincial election. As an organization comprised of women from communities and regions throughout the province, we were not convinced that the Liberal administration or the Progressive Conservative opposition understood or endorsed an agenda for the equality, equity and inclusion of women. If we were to put forward a strong women's agenda for discussion during the pre-election period the Council needed to involve women and women's organizations throughout the province.

The Advisory Council President and Staff undertook a series of conference calls, focus sessions and meetings with feminist organizations who shared our concern with the upcoming election and the condition of women's social and economic inequality. A *Women's Election Guide* was developed and written by the Advisory Council Staff and more than three thousand copies were distributed in our province. A further fifteen hundred copies were downloaded from the Council's website.

The *Women's Election Guide* focused on key themes: women seeking equality, women's economic security and independence, women and health, women and education and women and the environment. We will include in this report two of these key themes from our election guide.

The Advisory Council in submitting our annual report feels that these issues are as relevant in 2004 with a change in government as they were during the election period. Some of these include:

Women Seeking Equality

Since 1996 Newfoundland and Labrador has seen the highest numbers of women in elected office, and the highest number ever in Cabinet. We would like to think that each of the three parties aims to surpass this level of participation by women. In the past decade, as well, we have seen both provincial and federal governments erroneously claim to be addressing women's issues by using gender-based analysis, and claim that government departments are using this tool to inform policies, programs and legislation. The inadequate resourcing and constant under-funding of equality-seeking work is obvious, as well as the lip service being paid to women's social, economic, legal, political and cultural equality. Women and women's organizations are doing more and more of the work of government departments and filling the gaps in services to women, families and communities while the pro-active work of education and advocacy is being left behind.

Women, Decision Making and Leadership

Women have much to offer to leadership and decision making, yet our experience and education are not often included in the decisions, policies and legislation formulated by governments.

- & If women do not make up fifty percent of your elected members following this election, how does your government intend to include the voice and experience of women in social and economic decision-making?
- & Would your government undertake a policy or directive whereby every government appointment to boards or commissions will be a woman until women make up fifty percent of all decision-making bodies?
- & Would your government support a move toward proportional representation as a mechanism for increasing women's political participation?
- & What is your government's stand on affirmative action / employment equity?

Advocacy / Advising / Education

Newfoundland and Labrador is recognized throughout the country for having a funded, autonomous Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Few are aware of the simple truth that this organization is expected to fulfill a provincially-legislated mandate while struggling to survive financially:

- & What is your / your government's vision for the role and resourcing needs of the Status of Women portfolio?
- & Would you commit to providing funding for the Provincial Advisory Council parallel to that provided to the internal arm of the Status of Women department?
- & How would you / your government ensure that every department uses gender inclusive analysis when making decisions on policy, programs and legislation?

Women's Councils / Centres

Women's Councils / Centres provide services, advocacy and support to women and families in eight communities / regions of our province. They receive a mere \$50,000.00 from the provincial government:

- & Will you / your government work to establish adequate, long-term funding for the eight existing Women's Councils / Centres?
- & Would your government provide resourcing to allow new and emerging Women's Councils / Centres to educate themselves and women in their communities as they develop into feminist equality-seeking organizations?
- & Would your government resource Women's Councils / Centres to allow the staff to have benefits such as health, paid leave and pension?

Transition Houses and Shelters

Since the late 1990's Government has been devolving the Transition Houses to be encompassed by the Regional Health Boards. The Provincial Association Against Family Violence, the umbrella organization for the Transition Houses, continues to beg for annual funding although government departments (Justice, Health, Human Resources and Employment and the Women's Policy Office) constantly look to the Association for advice and consultation:

- & Would your government assist the Provincial Association Against Family Violence by providing adequate resourcing for this organization to fulfill its work?
- & Would your government make resourcing to the Provincial Association Against Family Violence a line item in the annual budget?

- & Would your government recognize the dual role of the Transition Houses to provide services to women and children in crisis and to provide education and awareness regarding the issues of family violence? Would your government provide adequate resourcing to Transition Houses to fulfill both of these roles?

Sexual Abuse

The Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre is the only organization directly serving the needs of sexually abused women in all of Newfoundland and Labrador. It receives a mere \$50,000.00 from the provincial government to provide education, counselling, advocacy and a crisis line, as well as providing consultation to government departments:

- & How would your government address the multifaceted needs of sexually abused women in this province?
- & How would your government deal with the resourcing issues constantly facing the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre?

Additional

- & Would your government support and resource annual meetings for feminist equality-seeking organizations as a mechanism to share ideas and strategies toward women's equality and inclusion?
- & Would your government support and resource a biennial provincial women's conference organized by women's equality-seeking organizations?

Women and Justice

For decades the organized women's movement has been lobbying, advising and advocating to bring attention to the injustices in the justice system. Inequality is the root cause of violence, yet organizations dealing with violence and inequality continue to struggle for respect and resourcing. Women and women's organizations have been consulted for years, and have provided knowledge, experience, expertise and analysis. Yet, little has changed. Whether we use terms like "domestic violence" or "spousal assault," we are still talking about violence and abuse toward women and children. The lack of legal aid services, conditional sentencing for heinous crimes against women and children, inadequate resourcing for the Victim Services program, and the murders of women at the hands of men who were known by police and justice officials to be abusive continue to be the issues important to women and equality-seeking groups.

Murder

Since 1985, more than two women per year have been killed by men already known to justice officials as being violent and abusive. Many of these murdered women had taken out peace bonds and restraining orders because they feared the violence would continue. In this province our justice system is involved in an inquiry into the wrongful convictions of men. We have never seen any investigation or inquiry into the “wrongful murders” of women killed by abusive men.

- & Would you / your government support a call for a high level inquiry into the “wrongful deaths” of women in Newfoundland and Labrador?
- & Following this inquiry, would your government provide an opportunity for grassroots women’s organizations and women with knowledge and expertise on issues of violence and abuse to make recommendations for dealing with the victimization of women by offenders and the justice system?
- & Further to the inquiry and recommendations, would your government construct a **Premier’s Council on Violence Against Women** to deal with the inadequacies within the justice system and to advise on the implementation of these recommendations?
- & Would your government ensure that a Premier’s Council on Violence Against Women includes women’s equality-seeking organizations who have a grassroots knowledge of violence and its impacts on women, families and communities?

Legal Aid

The legal aid system fails to meet the needs of women. The program gives priority to criminal offences, and assisting women to escape abusive relationships by providing legal representation is not a priority.

- & Will your government begin a process to re-examine the gender bias in legal aid and adequately resource family law, which women need to deal with violence and poverty?
- & Would your government remove the requirement that the family home is considered a disposable property for women seeking legal representation for family law matters?
- & Given that legal aid represents individuals charged with domestic assault, would your government ensure that women choosing peace bonds / restraining orders to deal with violence are also provided legal representation?

- & How will you / your government deal with the serious shortage of legal aid lawyers in the province, especially in the Labrador region?

Violence Prevention Initiative

The provincial government has a minimally resourced government-community program to address issues of violence. This program has many positive aspects. However, it is understaffed, under-resourced and does not have sufficient profile within the partner departments (Justice, Health and Community Services, Human Resources and Employment, Education, Youth and Post Secondary Education).

- & What is your government's vision of a government-community partnership focussing on violence prevention?
- & How would you / your government use the information and analysis from eight years of government-community collaboration to provide a province-wide program dealing with violence as a community issue?
- & There is a lack of gender-based analysis in school-based programs aimed at dealing with violence. Bullying programs do not acknowledge or address the inequality or gender issues implicit in violence. How does your government intend to deal with this issue?

Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Public Complaints Commission

A recent complaint of sexual and gender harassment against the Chief of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary was not dealt with adequately by the Public Complaints Commission.

- & Given that the Public Complaints Commission is not able to deal effectively with issues of sexual harassment against civilian employees, what mechanism would you / your government implement to provide a safe process to address gender and sexual harassment within the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary?
- & Would your government's policy include a request for officers in a position of power and authority over witnesses and victims to remove themselves until the issue has been investigated?

- & Would you / your government support the design and implementation of gender and sexual harassment prevention programs rather than the neutral respectful workplace programs which give minimal attention to issues of gender-based violence and abuse?

Incarcerated Women

Women in the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women are not having their needs adequately met. Many have severe mental health issues and others are in need of counselling to deal with abuse and personal violation. The Department of Justice chose not to replace the Classification position there for an entire year, exacerbating the situation.

There is also a lack of supports at the facility to assist inmates with employment and basic life skills. This institution does not reflect a women-centred approach to corrections as currently the management and supervisory positions are occupied by male staff.

- & What services or supports could / should the Justice Department put in place to address the needs of women at the Correctional Centre?
- & What pro-active measures would you / your government put in place to create a more women-centred, women-led environment at the Correctional Centre?
- & What alternatives would you / your government suggest to dealing with the inappropriate sentencing of women with serious psychiatric illnesses?
- & The Corrections and Community Services Division of the Department of Justice has a pregnancy accommodation policy. For women who work at the Clarenville Correctional Centre, other than relocating to St. John's, what would your government do to address this profound disrespect to women Correctional Officers?

Same-Sex Marriage

The federal government is poised to make changes to marriage legislation to provide the same marriage rights and responsibilities to opposite and same-sex couples. British Columbia and Ontario already provide opportunities for same-sex marriage.

- & Would you / your government support writing or amending current legislation to enable same sex couples to marry?

- & How would you / your government deal with the homophobia and backlash this issue has evoked in politicians and the general public?

Victim Services

Victim Services was originally implemented to deal with the needs of victims of violence (mainly women) to reduce their re-victimization through the court process. The caseloads of Victim Services workers are enormous, and changes in the program mean that workers spend less time with victims.

- & How would you / your government deal with the needs of women victims of violence who seek redress through the justice system?
- & Describe your approach to dealing with the issue and concerns within the Victim Services program.
- & Due to legislative changes in the Criminal Code in 1999, Victim Services experienced an explosion of referrals (104% increase), yet front line staff increased a minimal 20%. What commitment can you give to address the needs of the Victim Services program?
- & Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in Canada that has no dedicated program for children who must testify in court. What will your government do to ensure this vulnerable group are properly prepared for court?
- & The Victim Services program has two front-line workers in Labrador to service a vast geography with many isolated communities. What is your government's plan to improve service to this region?

Justice Issues (General)

These questions / concerns were raised by women who feel that violence, abuse and harassment are not effectively addressed by government departments:

- & Women who seek redress for violence or attempt to deal with family law matters through court processes experience a lack of sensitivity and a lack of proper services from police, lawyers, and judges. What initiatives would you / your government develop to ensure that police, court officials and judges are properly trained to deal with women and families who have experienced violence?

- & There are inadequate supports and services in place for immigrant and new Canadian women, children and families. The exclusion faced by this population due to language, gender, culture, religion and the racism in our schools and communities has escalated since September 11, 2001. What approach would your government take to dealing with the needs of immigrant and new Canadian families?
- & There are many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador like Churchill Falls where women experiencing violence either have to leave their homes and communities or live with the abuse. How would your government resource community safe houses and community-based violence prevention programs?
- & Men who abuse women and children receive little or no programming while incarcerated or upon release. How would you / your government deal with the need for programs for men who abuse women?
- & Currently, 911 services are not available to most regions of the province. In order to obtain emergency assistance, individuals must dial the 7-digit number of their nearest police detachment. This has serious implications for victims of violence, as well as for other emergency situations. What steps would your government take to create an effective accessible emergency response initiative throughout the province?

C. Advising / Advocating / Education

The Advisory Council's primary mandate is to educate and advocate on issues which affect women's equality and inclusion. In addition, we are in a strategic position to use the information and experiences from women and women's organizations to educate and advise Ministers and senior officials. There are many occasions when the direction of government departments will have negative consequences for women, families and communities and the Advisory Council has a responsibility to bring this to the attention of Government and the general public.

Examples of issues which have been raised during this period include:

- & Concerns with the lack of gender inclusive analysis in the provincial budget.
- & Concerns with the lack of programs and services for women incarcerated at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women.
- & Concerns with the future of the Strategic Social Plan and the need for these inclusive processes to continue with a new government.

- & Concerns with the lack of midwifery legislation to provide for women a full range of obstetrical health services.
- & Concerns with the lack of accountability mechanisms within the federal department of Status of Women Canada.
- & Concerns with the Province's emphasis on debt and deficit reduction and the impact this will have on the work, services and programs targeted toward dealing with issues of inequality and violence.
- & Concerns with including gender balance in the formation of a joint provincial / federal fishing advisory board.
- & Concerns with the inadequate budget provided to the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and how this impedes our provincial legislated mandate.
- & Concerns with the police complaints process and the lack of sexual and gender harassment policies at the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.
- & Concerns with the difficulty in accessing legal aid representation in family law matters.
- & Concerns with the same-sex marriage legislation and the homophobia displayed by Newfoundland and Labrador Members of Parliament.
- & Concerns with the inadequate budget provided to the eight Women's Councils / Centres in the province and the enormous amount of service delivery work these organizations provide to women and families.

D. Outreach / Consultation / Leadership

As an organization with a provincial mandate the Advisory Council works with other equality-seeking women's groups to strengthen their work and analysis. We accomplish this through the following ways:

- < Providing leadership to organizations with a shared agenda of women's equality and inclusion.
- < Providing information and everyday communication between organizations to share knowledge on issues and concerns which impact on women and families.
- < Assisting new and emerging women's groups who are attempting to organize as equality-seeking organizations.
- < Gathering women to focus on particular issues to strengthen the analysis and advice the Advisory Council provides to government departments.
- < Facilitating and coordinating activities which provide a focus for women to deepen our understanding of particular equality issues.
- < Providing information and analysis to government departments who are working on new legislation or policy.

Examples of the Advisory Council's work in this area during this period included:

- & Providing information, leadership and analysis throughout the year to organizations including Women Interested in Successful Employment, Women in Resource Development Committee, the Provincial Association Against Family Violence, Eastern Avalon Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence, and the Restorative Justice / Alternative Dispute Resolution Coalition. (100 meetings)
- & Meeting with a South Africa delegation to provide information and analysis on approaches to gender inclusive analysis.
- & Attendance at a number of local, provincial and Atlantic meetings on restorative justice and alternative dispute practices.
- & Assisting with women's campaigns and initiatives, such as Take Back the Night, outreach to Muslim women and International Women's Week.
- & Attending and providing a gender inclusive perspective and analysis at consultations undertaken by government and community organizations, i.e., Human Resources and Employment, Canadian Mental Health Association, National Association of Women and the Law, evaluation of the Violence Prevention Initiative, pre-budget consultations and the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place In Canada.
- & Making presentations and speeches and facilitating workshops, i.e. Memorial University School of Social Work, December 6th Vigil, Women's History Month and area high schools. (35 presentations / speeches)
- & Facilitated province-wide conference calls and a feminist roundtable between the new Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and equality-seeking women's organizations.
- & Attendance at regional and national meetings such as the National Coalition of Advisory Councils, the Roundtable on Legal Aid and Custody and Access, Health Canada's Strategy for Healthy Living, Atlantic Conference on Violence Against Girls and Women in Rural and Isolated Areas.
- & Coordinated and hosted bi-monthly conference calls with women's organizations in every region of the province.

E. Media

The President, as the public voice of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, is responsible for the pro-active and re-active 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. 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. The provincial women's community expects the Advisory Council President to bring forward a strong feminist critique of Government direction, yet it is important to maintain open dialogue with government Ministers. This is the difficult balancing act for the Advisory Council, deciding when to challenge and when to dialogue and to articulate advice on issues which is drawn from the Advisory Council Board and the broader women's community. Whenever possible the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women is made aware when the Advisory Council is taking a public position which challenges a Minister or Government direction.

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 pro-active stand on an issue all Staff are involved, from researching, writing, editing and fielding 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.

The office of the Advisory Council continues to collect statistical and anecdotal information on the media work we undertake each year. The Advisory Council has recorded one hundred and forty nine interviews during the period ending March 31, 2004.

Issues addressed and positions taken in the media included:

- < *Government releases Social Audit, From the Ground Up.*
The Advisory Council applauded Government for making important statistical information available to community decision makers. The Strategic Social Plan represents a collaborative way of government and community working together. Support for the Strategic Social Plan should be an election issue.
- < *Release of Report Bars, Booze and Sexual Violence.*
The Advisory Council supports the efforts to have men speak about anti-violence work. However, it is a constant struggle for minimally resourced anti-violence groups to take on the task of highlighting violence without the ongoing involvement of men and men's organizations.

- < **Sexist ad in local paper.**
This ad promotes sexist and unrealistic notions of women's size and shape. Encouraging women to apply for employment based on a specific body size is discriminatory and unacceptable.

- < ***Premier promotes violence over fishery closure.***
The Advisory Council challenged the Premier on a lack of leadership and promoting violence when he stated that fisher-people who ignored the fishery closure would not be prosecuted.

- < ***Workplace harassment and the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC).***
The President spoke about the dozens of calls received by the Advisory Council since the RNC Chief was accused of sexual harassment. She challenged the idea of male union leaders, justice officials and the Police Chief meeting to deal with sexual and gender harassment without the presence of women and women's organizations who work on these issues.

- < ***Fishery closure and violence against women.***
The Advisory Council stated that although this is not a rational for abuse and violence, unemployment, poverty and the lack of counselling services create a climate whereby abuse is more likely.

- < ***The comments of Newfoundland and Labrador Members of Parliament, John Effort and Loyola Hearn, on same-sex marriage.***
The Advisory Council felt that the comments made by these Members of Parliament and the lack of support for same-sex legislation from other Members of Parliament is homophobic and promotes hatred of minorities. Elected Members of Parliament should be expected to stand up for the rights of minorities.

- < ***New report on violence released.***
The Advisory Council recognized that Government does fund Transition Houses and Women's Centres, but challenged that these are understaffed and underfunded.

- < ***Female convict requests federal incarceration time because of lack of services at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women.***
The Advisory Council challenged the Department of Justice on its lack of services to incarcerated women. Presently there is no social worker on site and a psychiatrist visits monthly. This is unacceptable and needs to be addressed.

- < *Newfoundland and Labrador Members of Parliament consulting constituents and clergy on how they should vote on same-sex marriage.*
The Advisory Council sees this as a lack of leadership and challenges that on minority rights issues, the Newfoundland and Labrador public is no less homophobic than the Members of Parliament themselves. This action is no different than asking white people whether people of colour should have rights, or asking men if women should be allowed to vote in the early 20th century.

- < *Release of the Royal Commission report on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada.*
The Advisory Council praised the report and recognized that the process and the recommendations are built upon the Strategic Social Plan values of inclusion and linking social and economic decision making. The Advisory Council was especially pleased to see the reports endorsement of the need for a renewed examination of the state of women's equality nationally, as well as the need for stronger policies within our government decision-making mechanisms.

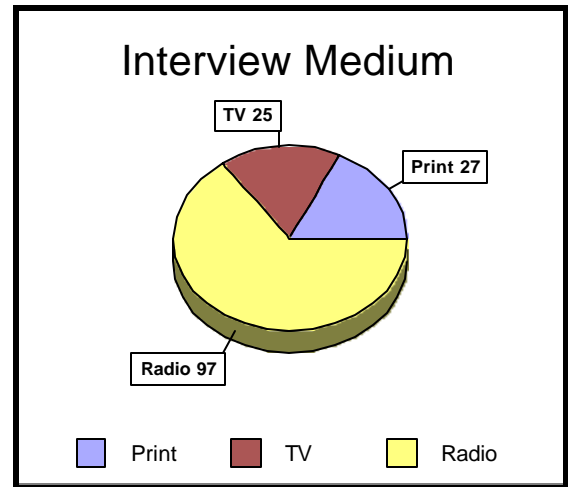
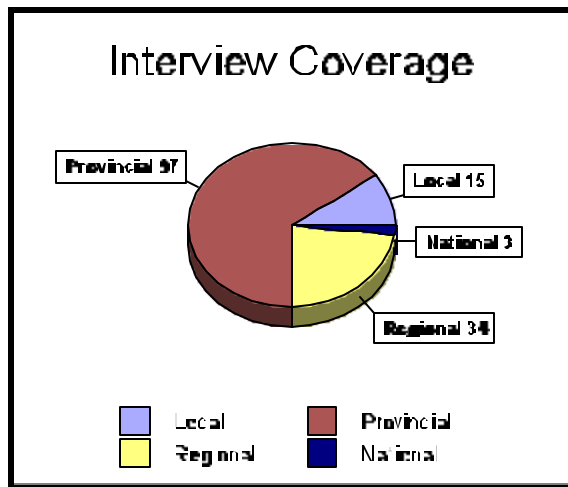
- < *Federal same-sex marriage legislation and role of churches.*
The Advisory Council President spoke on a morning radio panel with a federal Member of Parliament and a clergy person. Her key points included: marriage and caring for children is not the privilege of heterosexual couples; there is no research to say that the children of gay couples do not grow into well adjusted, productive citizens; and the reason for marriage is not procreation, as sexual intimacy takes place between heterosexual couples who are beyond child bearing age, as well as couples using birth control.

- < *Police Complaints Commission denies complaints of sexual harassment against RNC Chief.*
The Advisory Council responded that this sends a message to civilian RNC Staff, as well as female officers, that they have no recourse if they are harassed or abused by fellow officers.

- < *Premier Grimes guest on provincial call in program.*
The Advisory Council President questioned the Premier on the lack of redress for women who work with the RNC when they experience harassment, as well as Government's allowing the RNC Chief to stay in a position of power and authority while an investigation of harassment was ongoing.

- < *Bill C-22 Federal Divorce Legislation.*
The Advisory Council is disappointed that there is an absence of gender analysis or a recognition of violence issues in this proposed bill.
- < *Stephenville woman murdered.*
The Advisory Council is concerned that women continue to think that peace bonds and restraining orders offer protection from abusive men. In the past five years, three women have been killed in this region by men who have been known to the police and to courts for being abusive.
- < *Man awaiting dangerous offender trial released.*
The Advisory Council has followed this case and these victims for many years. We feel a serious illness is not sufficient reason for releasing a convicted offender who has never admitted guilt, taken a program or apologized to his victims.
- < *Advisory Council releases Election Guide.*
The Advisory Council has taken a strong focus on justice issues, as well as encouraging political parties and candidates to give a commitment to increasing the numbers of women who are informing them on economic and social policy decision-making.
- < *RCMP release name of man who has served an eleven-year sentence for spreading HIV virus.*
The Advisory Council recognizes that there is a fine line between individual rights and the sexual and physical safety of women and young girls, especially in rural communities. The Newfoundland and Labrador AIDS Committee needs to be adequately resourced to provide testing, as well as education and awareness.
- < *Ten women elected to provincial legislature.*
This is a great day for our province, for women and for everyone who believes that democratic government needs the advice and expertise of women and men.
- < *Four women named to the Progressive Conservative Cabinet.*
The Advisory Council congratulated the Premier for recognizing and valuing the expertise of women Members of the House of Assembly.

- < *Two teenage girls sexually assaulted in Nain.*
The Inuit community is lacking in mental health and counselling programs. There is great difficulty in small rural communities in dealing with this type of crime when the offender and victim are known to everyone.
- < *Death of Nellie (Nippard) Murphy.*
The Advisory Council responded recognizing that Nellie was a true voice to victims who have been re-victimized by the parole system. She told the story of her near death over and over as she fought for the rights of victims to be present and heard at National Parole hearings.
- < *The Progressive Conservative and Canadian Alliance parties merge.*
The Advisory Council invited women to be vigilant that the hard-won rights of women and minorities are at risk given the Alliance Party's stand on abortion and homosexuality. There are Newfoundland and Labrador Members of Parliament who have been very overt about their anti-choice views and they will find a solid base of support for these within the new Conservative Party.
- < *The Premier's State of the Province Address.*
The Advisory Council responded including concerns for rural communities and people living on income support. The Advisory Council President felt that the democratic process of union / government collective bargaining was usurped by this government stand.
- < *Corner Brook Judge stated that "court orders lack teeth."*
The Advisory Council President applauded the judge for stating what women victims and advocacy groups have long recognized and named for many years.
- < *Pre-budget Consultations.*
The Advisory Council has always participated in these, although it is a difficult exercise to believe in given the Premier's January address to the province. Women's organizations and the Provincial Advisory Council continue to point out to the Finance Minister how equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations actually save money by providing services and programs which have been and should be delivered by government departments.
- < *Advisory Council upset by Justice Minister's comments.*
The Advisory Council felt that the Minister's comments on legal aid were ill informed. The President reminded the Minister that women in Newfoundland and Labrador are in desperate need of legal representation at very vulnerable times in cases of violence, child support and when custody of children is in dispute.



A total of 149 interviews were recorded for the period covering April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004

Preparation Time	2735 minutes / 45.58 hours
Research Time	580 minutes / 9.66 hours
Consultation Time	1780 minutes / 29.66 hours
Interview Time	1809 minutes / 30.15
Total Time Commitment Recorded	6904 minutes / 115.06 hours

F. Information / Crisis / Advocacy

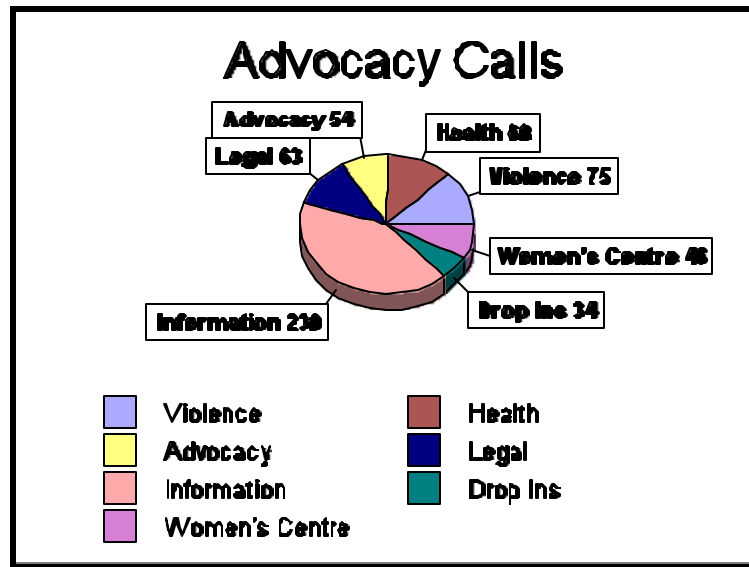
The Provincial Advisory Council's St. John's office receives dozens of telephone calls and visits every week from women who find themselves in difficult personal circumstances. This area of our work, although not written into the Advisory Council's legislated mandate, involves a great deal of Staff time. It is important that Staff be available to listen to the concerns of women, to assist and provide information and referral to appropriate services. This is also an important activity in determining the extent that a concern is impacting women, and whether it may need more advocacy to a particular agency or government department.

The Advisory Council's strong connection to grassroots women's organizations, shelters and anti-violence groups place Staff in a unique position to assist these organizations. We receive daily calls from women's equality-seeking groups needing advice or assistance in their work at a community level.

The following are examples of issues brought to the Staff of the Advisory Council in this period, as well as a reference to Staff time involved. We would estimate that about fifty percent of our organization's advocacy, referral and support work is never recorded because time does not permit a three-woman Staff with a provincial mandate to collect statistical information.

- < A group of women working within government departments and community agencies, including health care as well as policing, came together at the Advisory Council to talk about the extent of workplace sexual and gender harassment.
- < A woman who had waited for months to read her victim impact statement at the sentencing hearing of her abuser was not permitted to do so as the offender pleaded guilty.
- < A woman from a small Labrador community called to discuss the need for mental health counselling for a family member who had attempted suicide on several occasions.
- < Two young women visited the Advisory Council office in an attempt to locate a clothing bank. It was winter, the temperature was sub-zero and they were wearing summer clothing.
- < A woman who was recently released from the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women in Clarenville visited the Advisory Council office to discuss the needs of women in that institute. She talked about the social worker being on maternity leave and not replaced, the lack of programming for inmates and the fact that psychiatric visits are one to two months apart.
- < A woman working with a community-based organization had been approached by media for an interview. Although the organization's leadership wanted to respond, they felt a need for advice on an approach which would not re-victimize women in their community.
- < Several women called to discuss the difficulty with accessing services at the Human Resources, Labour and Employment offices in St. John's. They talked about overworked Staff who did not have time to listen to the poverty of income support.

- < Numerous calls were recorded from women who were upset with the judge's comments in the case of the RNC Chief and a senior female officer.



& *Total time commitment recorded 5457 minutes*

G. Communications

It is through the Advisory Council's constant and consistent communication with grassroots women's organizations and other groups with whom we share an equality agenda that we are able to be informed and to inform government on matters of equality and equity. Communication is a challenging task with only a three-woman Staff and we are relying on technology and electronic communications tools. The Advisory Council hosts and moderates the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Listserv which includes the participation of more than two hundred individual women and equality-seeking organizations.

This listserv is used daily by the Advisory Council to inform women throughout the province of a particular issue which could impact on their work with women, families and communities. The Advisory Council is able through this ongoing communication tool to hear the experiences, concerns, activities and strategies which women's organizations are undertaking to bring attention to situations and government directions which impact on the social and economic situation of women.

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 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 pro-active 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 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 and workshops, as well as our newsbulletins, media releases, briefs and reports. The Community Liaison / Communications Director researches and edit and the Secretary / Bookkeeper types and formats all of our original work and writings.

Two key pieces of work produced in-house by the Advisory Council Staff include the *Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Election Guide 2003* and the *Women's History Month Women's Herstory Contest*. The *Election Guide* was developed over a four-month period and grounded in the issues and concerns highlighted by individual women and women's equality-seeking organizations. The *Women's History Month* contest and booklet succeeded in reaching hundreds of women as well as high school students in dozens of communities. This information was the Council's way of highlighting the contributions of Newfoundland and Labrador women to the quest for the equality and inclusion of women in our province and country.

Another pro-active aspect of the Advisory Council's communications strategy is our conference calls with women's organizations throughout the province, as well as our daily telephone and electronic mail discussions with women who work on issues of women's social and economic equality. We have recorded seven such conference calls in this period with the participation of women and women's organizations including:

- & Gateway Women's Council / Centre, Port Aux Basques
- & Bay St. George Women's Council / Centre, Stephenville
- & Corner Brook Women's Council / Centre
- & Corner Brook Transition House
- & Labrador West Women's Council / Centre
- & Hope Haven Transition House, Labrador West
- & Churchill Falls women
- & Women's Policy Office
- & Cartwright women

- & Northern Peninsula women
- & Central Newfoundland Women's Council / Centre, Grand Falls-Windsor
- & Iris Kirby Transition House, St. John's
- & Labrador Straits women
- & Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre
- & Libra Transition House, Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- & Torngats Inuit Annait
- & Mokami Women's Council / Centre, Happy Valley-Goose Bay
- & Discovery Women's Centre, Clarenville
- & Gender Women's Council / Centre
- & Regional Coordinating Coalitions Against Violence (six regions)
- & Status of Women Ministers, Yvonne Jones and Joan Burke
- & Family Resource Centres
- & Naomi Centre, St. John's
- & Planned Parenthood Newfoundland and Labrador
- & Women Interested in Successful Employment
- & Department of Justice
- & Women In Resource Development Committee
- & FFAW Union

Topics covered on conference calls:

- < In April of 2003, and again in January 2004, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women participated in a conference call with equality-seeking women's organizations, new and emerging women's groups and anti-violence coalitions. This was an opportunity to discuss issues of concerns for women and families.
- < The closing of Human Resources, Labour and Employment offices and concerns for individuals and families dealing with poverty.
- < The Federal Bill C-22 and the proposed amendments to the Divorce Act.
- < Mental health issues and concerns with the lack of services for individuals and families in rural and remote regions.
- < Justice issues including lack of legal aid representation, lack of access to courts and the lack of police / community collaboration.
- < Increase in the use of Transition Houses and Shelters and concerns with under-reporting of violence and abuse of women and children.

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