

***Moving Forward Our
Equality-Seeking Agenda***

**Final Report on Roundtable Discussions:
Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres
and the
Provincial Advisory Council on the
Status of Women**

**May 12 & 13, 2005
St. John's, NL**

Foreword

In mid-May, Board members and Staff of the eight Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres in Newfoundland and Labrador met in St. John's with the Board and Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to discuss the work provided by these grassroots feminist organizations, and; to make recommendations as to how best to move forward our mutual equality-seeking agenda.

The evening and full day event provided a wonderful opportunity to share the reality of the enormous amount of work carried out by our organizations, including services to women, families and communities, individual and systems advocacy, leadership and capacity building, as well as gender inclusive analysis. The Provincial Advisory Council Board, which is comprised of women from throughout the province, were able to play a facilitative role as well as inform the agenda with experience and analysis drawn from dozens of years of involvement with grassroots equality-seeking feminist organizations.

In this report we have attempted to capture the content, context and spirit of the panels, presentations, roundtables and plenary. The strategies and recommendations to the federal and provincial Status of Women Ministers, the Women's Policy Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women can be quickly found on pages 17 to 20. The strategies and recommendations directly to the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres can be found on Page 21 to 28.

A very warm thank you to the Board members and Staff of the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres for taking the time to travel from across the Island and Labrador. The enclosed report attempts to encompass our dialogue as well as outline the substantive recommendations. We trust you will be able to use this in our mutual quest to advance women's equality in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In Sisterhood,

Joyce M. Hancock
President
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

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Agenda

May 12th, 2005, 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

May 13th, 2005, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 12th

- 5:30 p.m. Gather at the Lantern
Introductions and Registration
- 6:00 Meal: Board and Staff of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres
Board and Staff of the Provincial Advisory Council
- 7:00 Panel Presentation and Discussion
Panelists will speak for 5-7 minutes addressing the following:
1. What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?
 2. How do we keep feminism relevant to our work?
 3. What are the challenges for you (your organization) in today's political climate?
 4. Strategy suggestions for dealing with these challenges.
- Panelists:
- Elaine Condon, Gender Women's Council / Centre
 - Kim Dreddy, Transition House Association of NL
 - Ann Marie Anonsen, Women In Resource Development Committee
 - Tracy Duffy, NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre
 - Lana Payne, Fish Food and Allied Workers Union/Canadian Auto Workers
- Moderator:
- Joyce Hancock, NL Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Friday, May 13th

- 8:30 a.m. Coffee and Re/introductions
- 9:00 Review of Agenda and Goals
- 9:15 Presentations: Where is Our Equality-Seeking Agenda?
- How Did it Get this Way? History of Women's Councils' / Centres' funding, Joyce Hancock
 - Analysis of Service Agreements and Provincial Government's Commitment to Women's Councils / Centres, Michelle Smith

- 9:40 Open Discussion
- 10:00 Sharing our Reality: Facilitated Roundtable
1. What determines (drives) the everyday work and involvements at our Women Centres?
 2. What should determine (drive) the everyday work and involvement at our Women's Centres?
- 10:45 Nutrition Break
- 11:00 Report Back From "Sharing Our Reality"
- 11:30 Roundtable: Challenges and Strategies
- Making feminism relevant to our work.
 - Defining our role and workload
 - Moving our equality agenda forward.
- 12:30 Lunch
- Taking Our Places, Michelle Morgan
Exploring Values in Child Protection, Elaine Condon
Marguerite's Place project, Liza Zigler
- 1:15 Panel (solution focused) - Drawn from morning discussion on Challenges and Strategies
- 2:00 Break
- 2:15 Roundtable Discussions: Moving Forward
- Proposing strategies/recommendations in our mutual quest to move forward with our women's equality seeking agenda within our organizations, communities, province and country.
- 3:15 Brief report back
- 3:45 Closing

Feminists Speak

Panel Presentation and Discussion

Thursday, May 12, 2005

Moderator

- Joyce Hancock, NL Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Panelists:

- Ann Marie Anonsen, Women In Resource Development Committee
- Kim Dreddy, Transition House Association of NL
- Tracy Duffy, NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre
- Elaine Condon, Gender Women's Council / Centre
- Lana Payne, Fish Food and Allied Workers Union/Canadian Auto Workers

Each panelist was asked to speak for 5-7 minutes and address the following issues and/or questions:

What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?

How do we keep feminism relevant to our work?

What are the challenges for you (your organization) in today's political climate?

Strategy suggestions for dealing with these challenges.

The following key messages were delivered by the moderator and panelists:

Joyce Hancock

Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

The phrase "advocacy chill" has been coined by feminists in our attempt to define how provincial and federal governments have moved further and further away from the language of women's equality-seeking work.

We continue to ask the question, "who controls our equality-seeking feminist agenda?" The funders of projects? The contracts women's organizations are forced to sign to stay viable? Or feminist women and equality-seeking organizations who work with or without government funding to move a women's equality agenda forward?

Feminists and feminist organizations must re/claim our organizations and our basic right to work for change. Women who work within equality-seeking organizations must recognize that this work is more than charity. As much as women need food banks and women's groups want to help individual women find access to the basic necessities such as food and housing, our women's equality-seeking organizations must work to challenge the very systems which make food banks necessary.

We should recognize that projects and service delivery contracts are merely piecemeal and can only go so far. It is the sustaining presence of independent, arms-length advocacy, equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations which moves women's equality forward.

Ann Marie Anonsen
Women In Resource Development Committee (WRDC)

WRDC focuses on economic equality for women. It works to promote women in trades and technology and break down the barriers facing women entering the natural resource sector. Most women in Canada earn \$25,000 per year, while men average \$60,000 per year. We are concerned that women are not on the table for making industry-based decisions.

To be an equality-seeking feminist organization means many things, including researching and recognizing inequality, using this information to lobby, advocate and change policies, and then following up by watching to see if the strategies work.

We keep feminism relevant to our work by incorporating feminist values and perspectives into our work and allowing women to be who / what they are. WRDC is not a hierarchical organization in that everyone is considered to be equal, although there is a separation of roles and responsibilities. We can also encourage and support staff to be involved with sister feminist organizations, and actively participate in boards and committees.

A major challenge in today's political climate is to find the support women need. For example, women need financial assistance in order to access education in order to improve their lives. Obtaining adequate resources and financial supports is an ongoing issue.

A number of strategies can be employed for dealing with these challenges. It is important to partner, mentor and connect with other women who share a common equality-seeking agenda; work with anyone you can to push the agenda. We also need to continue to seek out funding from government to resource our equality-seeking work. Within our organizations, we should take care of ourselves and each other through practicing self-care. And finally, it is import to keep on doing what we are already doing.

Kim Dreddy
Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (THANL)

Currently, there are 7 shelters in existence in the province. While this is an extremely challenging time politically, the main issues have been fairly consistent.

How do we keep feminism relevant to our work? A popular saying is, "through anger comes change." The grassroots women in our province made sure that shelters were built in communities to serve women in need. They didn't start off with funding but they still worked toward this goal of building shelters and eventually prevailed. Equality-seeking work is grounded in feminism.

A number of challenges exist for THANL and shelters / transition houses throughout the province. THANL is only funded for one half-time staff position. Shelters cannot take on proposals for project funding, as there is no one given the limited number of staff to carry out the project work.

We can see the parallels of women living in community in isolation. Violence is deeply rooted in inequality, and financial security and independence are enormous issues for women. Most women's equality-seeking organizations have been consistently under-funded and under-resourced by governments.

The future holds many more challenges. Funding isn't the only issue; consistency has been difficult because there are seven different regions with different boards of directors. Also, our funders appear more and more interested in knowing statistics or the number of "heads and beds" instead of examining the full scope and breadth of the work we do. When governments and funders are only interested in numbers this makes equality-seeking work, which is not easily quantified, difficult.

Strategy suggestions for dealing with these challenges include depending on our sister organizations who have strong voices, and maintaining and/or re-establishing feminist principles where they don't exist.

Tracy Duffy

Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre Inc. (NLSACPC)

The NLSACPC has been in existence for more than 25 years working on issues of sexual violence and abuse. We recognize that violence is rooted in inequality; as an equality-seeking organization we work to promote this viewpoint. We provide front-line services to survivors of sexual violence and use the knowledge we gain through service delivery to advocate for equality. We work with our partners in community, in the province and with our national organization (CASAC), and will continue to work to gain equality for women.

The lack of awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault / violence is a major challenge for our organization in today's political climate. There is still a huge stigma attached to sexual abuse, and a lack of comprehensive procedures for sexual assault victims.

In order to deal with these challenges we need to commit to more equality-seeking advocacy work. We need to keep abreast of what is happening politically and be both reactive and proactive around government "hot topics." We also need to continue our outreach and networking with our provincial and national sister organizations and continue to work to educate the public.

Elaine Condon**Gander Status of Women Council / Women's Centre**

Previously, Women's Centres had two sources of funding from the federal government. Status of Women Canada / federal government cut the funding we used to use for advocacy. The provision of funding has been picked up by the provinces, which in our case wants us to focus on the delivery of services.

Women come to Women's Centres for assistance. We used to take those issues women brought to us and lobby government for changes in policies, programs, etc. Women's Centres have become heavily involved in service delivery work, and have lost the equity / advocacy piece. As a result, we are putting band-aids on cuts to services that had previously been delivered by governments. Women working in Women's Centres are getting burned out because we are busy being reactive instead of pro-active.

In order to deal with these challenges, we need to respect the role of advocacy. We can strengthen our advocacy by becoming engaged in networking and staying connected to each other, such as on the PACSW listserv. Another strategy that was recently raised at the NAWL conference is that when we are dealing with governments, we need to act as if the changes we want (e.g., to Women's Policy Office Client Data Registry) are already in place. In terms of the federal government, we need to advocate for core federal funding. As well, we need to continuously pay attention to social justice and social change, and what is happening in our country.

Lana Payne**Fish Food and Allied Workers Union/Canadian Auto Workers**

The word woman has virtually been erased from the country's public policy debate, and women's voices inside and outside of government have been weakened and isolated. Some of this is a result of the elimination of core or sustained funding for women's equality work and the downgrading of the Status of the Status of Women department. Some of it is part of the larger picture of the erosion of democracy in Canada, or the 1995 federal budget which slashed social programs and forced women into a delivery role rather than an advocacy role. Some of it is because of the neo-liberal agenda that has infiltrated the thinking of most public policy these days – the individual versus the collective; privatization, globalization, deregulation, etc.

To be an equality-seeking organization means making structural changes (to board, councils, etc.) so that women are in decision-making roles, and providing supports like child care so women can participate. It also means bargaining items that contribute to women's equality, including equal wages, family time, flex time, child care subsidies and paid time for women's committees in our workplaces to meet and strategize.

It also means we advocate and agitate for women's equality. We do this in a number of ways, through campaigns and lobbying efforts for better minimum wages, for a national child care program that is public and not-for-profit, for better pensions, and an Employment Insurance program that treats women fairly and recognizes the nature of their work. It means that we do our part to create awareness around violence against women in our workplaces and in our communities, work with our social justice partners around poverty, and our voices with our sisters working exclusively and tirelessly on these issues.

We need to make our groups and organizations as broad and as inclusive as possible. We need to mobilize within our own organizations, work in coalitions and build relationships and networks with our sister organizations. Our strength comes from women working together in solidarity, in sisterhood. And it will come from our ability to use the media, to communicate our message, and to ensure that women's equality is on the agenda. Only we can put it there.

Presentations

Where is Our Equality-Seeking Agenda?

Friday, May 13, 2005

How Did it Get this Way? History of Women's Councils' / Centres' Funding **Joyce Hancock**

Prior to 1998, seven of the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres in our province received core funding from the Secretary of State Women's Program. There was no funding from the province other than small grants (\$1500 - \$4000) from the Women's Policy Office. The relationship between the Status of Women Minister, the Women's Policy Office, the Provincial Advisory Council and the seven Status of Women Councils was strong and respectful. The Minister visited the Women's Councils at least annually to "listen and learn" about the issues. The Women's Policy Office Assistant Deputy Minister and Director often sought the advice and input of Women's Council / Centre Coordinators on specific initiatives.

The Status of Women Councils considered themselves to be agents of change and, although individual women sought referral and support from Women Centres, the Centres were very much involved in advocacy and public education, bringing a strong women-centred perspective to the issues of importance to women in communities and regions.

From the early to mid 1990's, the federal Status of Women Canada Women's Program began moving away from core or sustained funding for the equality-seeking work of the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres. In 1997, the seven Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres organized an education and lobby exercise with the Provincial Status of Women Minister and five of her Cabinet colleagues.

The purpose of the exercise was to convince the government of that day of the important services and advocacy provided by the day-to-day work of the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres. This lobby was successful and in December of 1997 the provincial government announced that the seven Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres would each receive \$30,000.00. This was later increased to \$45,000.00. An eighth Status of Women Council / Women's Centre developed in Central Newfoundland and requested provincial funding. A change of government in 2003 has seen two small increases: \$5000.00 per Women's Council in 2004; and \$10,000.00 each in 2005. Presently the eight Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres receive an annual grant from the provincial government of \$65,000.00.

Meanwhile, the federal Status of Women Canada Women's Program has continued shifting its focus away from the resourcing of grassroots equality-seeking work to funding projects targeted toward federally determined priorities. The eight Status of Women Councils are no longer given any priority for funding. Women's equality-seeking organizations' work has become mainstreamed into gender equality. This has opened the door for organizations who are not feminist, whose central priority is not women's equality and equity, to have access to the meager resources provided by the Women's Program in Newfoundland and Labrador.

While the provincial government has provided money through service agreements, the Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres have become focused on the everyday needs of women who have seen more and more of the services previously provided by provincial government departments disappear. This has too often left the equality-seeking feminist agenda of the Women's Centres vulnerable. Too often service delivery and individual advocacy take up all of the paid and volunteer time and the systems advocacy, public education and lobbying are left undone.

Resourcing the equality-seeking advocacy work of grassroots feminist organizations is the responsibility of both federal and provincial governments. The challenges we have today include:

- ensuring that grassroots women's equality-seeking organizations have the autonomy to set their own agenda in keeping with the goals of women's equality in response to the issues brought forward by women in your community;
- ensuring that information collected about your work at Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres is a true reflection of what you do including individual services, individual and systems advocacy, education and leadership;
- ensuring that the project resourcing accessed through federal programs (including the federal Women's Program) are incorporated into our broader women's equality agenda; and

- continuing to insist that the federal Status of Women Canada Women's Program become responsive to a request for core funding to do the sustained equality-seeking work at the Women's Councils / Centres.

Analysis of Service Agreements and Provincial Government's Commitment to Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres

Michelle Smith

The following are the key points from the analysis of the service contracts between the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, as represented by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and the (currently eight) Status of Women Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador for the years 2000 through 2005.

Overall, Status of Women Councils should be aware that the contracts have improved in terms of the reporting requirements (semi-annual versus quarterly) and the dispersal of funds (three payments with the first installment being 50% of the total funding amount – currently \$65,000 per year – versus the previous arrangement of four equal installments of the funds). However, other changes could potentially raise concerns and questions for Status of Women Councils.

Funding Women's Centres

A positive aspect of the service agreements is that the purpose is no longer *"to define the services to be provided by the Council,"* as was the case in the 2001 and 2002 contracts. However, while it is the Status of Women Councils who enter into the service agreements with Government, the purpose of the funding is specifically for the Women's Centres that the Councils operate.

In the 2003 service agreement, the language describing the purpose was rewritten. It now reads: *"to provide financial support to the Council to operate a Women's Centre and to ensure the money is spent in accordance with the activities in the work plan."* We might assume it is the case that Status of Women Councils as stand-alone entities would not be funded by Government (i.e., for the purpose of advocacy and lobbying work, etc.) unless they also deliver services. This could be of particular concern for new and/or emerging Councils who have not yet established (or may not wish to establish) a Women's Centre to carry out service delivery work.

Approved Work Plans

There has been no change in requirement for the Status of Women Councils to submit work plans to the Women's Policy Office in the last five years in order to access core funding. However, beginning in 2004, Section 3.1 of the service agreement changed to include a clause that work plans must be approved by the Women's Policy Office: "*Subject to all other provisions in this agreement, the Minister shall provide an amount of \$[amount] to the Council for the Women's Policy Office fiscal year [year] based on a commitment that a work plan is submitted to the office of Women's Policy and approved by Women's Policy by April 30, 2004.*" This point may be worth considering for Status of Women Councils: on what basis might the work plans not be approved by Government?

Acceptable Reporting Requirements

It should be noted that this is not a new clause in the contracts, as it is present in all five of the service agreements. However, given the current challenges to equality-seeking work and the lack of value placed upon advocacy and lobbying work by Government, Status of Women Councils should be aware of the requirement of semi-annual reports to be in a form that is "acceptable" to the provincial government.

The wording in the 2005 contract requires Status of Women Councils "*to provide semi annual reports to Women's Policy Office on the activities outlined in the service plans, in a form acceptable to the Women's Policy Office, to be received within 15 days after each semi annual dates of the follows (Sept 30, 2005, March 31, 2006).*"

We might assume that the new statistical data reporting format proposed by Government could constitute the reporting form that is now considered "acceptable." What might be the implications for Status of Women Councils if required to report in a format they feel is burdensome or not reflective of all the work that they do around advocacy and lobbying, for example?

Core, Complementary Services

In the earlier service agreements (2001, 2002) the wording used to describe the services provided by Councils was broad, and generally referenced "core services." A significant change in wording occurred in 2003, defining what the core services are or the categories under which they fall: "*core services in information and referral, direct service, public education and outreach, and community leadership.*" Missing from this description is any reference to the advocacy and lobbying work done by Women's Centres and Status of Women Councils.

This could be somewhat problematic in the event that Government is defining the specific types of services that must be delivered according to the contract. Currently, some Councils/Centres simply include advocacy in their work plans as one of the direct services provided. However, this may not be acceptable to Government, or reflective of the desired evidence-based outcomes Government wishes to produce.

To this end, the *2003-2004 Annual Report* of the Women's Policy Office contains an interpretation or generalization of what constitutes "direct services" in the "Status of Women Councils" section on page 18:

Status of Women Councils – In 2003-2004, the Women's Policy Office provided grant funding in the amount of \$50,000 to each of eight Status of Women's Councils across the province to operate a Women's Centre in accordance with a work plan that each Council submits and is approved by the Women's Policy Office. Within each service contract, the councils provide the following: (i) information and referral services; (ii) direct services – generally in the form of counseling and peer support; (iii) public education; and (iv) community leadership. (Women's Policy Office (2004). *2003-2004 Annual Report*. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, p. 18.)

It should also be noted that all of the five contracts state that these services must be "complementary to the services being provided by a number of government departments and agencies." While there has been no change in the language around this clause between 2001 and 2005, Women's Councils / Centres should be aware that this conditionality does exist and that it potentially has ramifications for the type of work and services provided by Women's Centres.

For example, given that fewer and fewer services are being provided by Government in communities, particularly rural areas, one might assume Women's Centres are expected to fill in the gaps (e.g., assisting HRLE clients fill out income support applications) through the provision of services. This leaves less and less time/ability for advocacy and lobbying activities, and therefore, fewer opportunities for women's voices to be heard and women's needs addressed by Government.

On the other hand, we can also interpret this clause to be supportive of the advocacy and equality-seeking work of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres. Aside from government departments, the clause specifies that services must be complementary to the services being provided by *a number of government agencies*. To this end, a number of government agencies do exist to provide advocacy / intervention / investigations on behalf of the citizens of the province. These include the offices of the Privacy Commissioner, the Citizens' Representative, the Child and Youth Advocate, the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as well as the Status of Women Ministry and Women's Policy Office. This could be a useful point of comparison to Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres in moving their equality-seeking feminist agenda forward.

Roundtable Discussion Challenges and Strategies Friday, May 13, 2005

During the May 13 session participants were asked to work in facilitated roundtables to share their reflections around challenges and strategies on one of three topics. Following the discussions, one woman from each roundtable reflected on her group's discussions with the large group.

Making feminism relevant to our work.

- What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?
- How do / can we use feminist processes / practices / principles within our Women's Councils / Women's Centres?

Defining our role and work.

- How do we see our role as service providers?
- How do we see our role as advocates / advocacy organizations?

Moving our equality agenda forward.

- What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?
- How do we manage our role as an advocacy organization while supporting individual women who look to us for assistance?

Making Feminism Relevant to Our Work Reflections by Janet O'Donnell

What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?

How do / can we use feminist processes / practices / principles within our Women's Councils / Women's Centres?

- Feminism is still the "F-Word" in Labrador.
- Not all of our Board members are comfortable defining themselves as "feminist" and not everybody is comfortable with "feminist" terminology.
- We have to wear many different lenses, such as cultural and/or geographical. For example, if we organize an event how will women be able to access transportation in order to attend? Do we have translators? Is it culturally relevant?
- We aren't doing our work in a loud feminist way.
- Meetings such as this bring strength.

- We have to be more creative and do things differently, and we need to get more women who are comfortable with feminism on our boards.
- We also need to respect women who do equality-seeking work but are uncomfortable with “feminism.”
- *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* is a good place to start. We need learning circles and to do more exploration around feminism and feminist language.

Defining Our Role and Work

Reflections by Lisa Zigler

How do we see our role as service providers?

How do we see our role as advocates / advocacy organizations?

- The issue of workload is one which must be addressed by all our organizations and boards. We feel overwhelmed with the complex issues women bring to our Centres. Women have nowhere else to go for help or assistance and so we try to be all things to all women.
- Women’s Centre staff feel our organizations are being viewed as the “cheap alternative” to services provided by government, and are busy scrambling to deliver services.
- Some Status of Women Councils do not have time to carry out advocacy / equality-seeking work because they are overwhelmed trying to provide direct services. This makes it difficult to create systemic change. We need resources, staff and other services in the community. When we say “equality-seeking” work, what are we talking about? We are not all on the same page. The trend is toward service delivery. We need to examine this, and engage everyone in the process.
- We need to get together and examine our equality-seeking work and what we need to do. What is feasible?
- Funding is an issue. The St. John’s Women’s Centre has charitable status, enabling more access to funding. The Centre and the Status of Women Council have been split, with the Centre providing services and the Council acting as the political action arm. One suggestion is to hold a conference call with Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council to explore this strategy further.
- A helpful strategy in referring women to government services is to refer women to specific individuals / staff rather than the agency in general. We should try to ensure our boards are comprised of feminist women.
- We can use the media to move our equality-seeking agenda forward.

- We can continue to talk about fundraising and making connections with different groups, etc.

Moving Our Equality Agenda Forward

Reflections by Noreen Careen

What does it mean to be an equality-seeking feminist organization?

How do we manage our role as an advocacy organization while supporting individual women who look to us for assistance?

- We need to change the system to fit the needs of women, not the other way around.
- Gender analysis is so important in the work we do. However, if the people who represent us and write the policies for our work, such as Boards, Governments, and funders, do not share our common vision this makes it much more difficult for our Centres to be the equality-seeking organizations we need to be.
- We cannot allow ourselves to be divided from each other or from the Provincial Advisory Council by Government, funders, etc.
- Inclusiveness is important. We need to keep the big picture in mind and create change for all women.

Roundtable Discussion

Moving Forward: Strategies and Recommendations

Friday, May 13, 2005

During the May 13 meeting of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council, women participated in facilitated roundtable discussions to develop and recommend strategies in our mutual quest to moving forward with our equality seeking feminist agenda within our organizations, communities, province and country.

Women were asked to recommend strategies to:

- & ourselves as Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres;
- & the NL Advisory Council on the Status of Women and provincial equality-seeking organizations;
- & the provincial Status of Women Minister and the Women's Policy Office; and
- & the federal Status of Women Minister / Women's Program

Each roundtable of women recorded their strategies and recommendations for moving forward on flip charts and presented them back to the large group. The following strategies and recommendations have been adapted from the flip chart notes:

Strategies and Recommendations to the Women's Policy Office and Provincial Government

Service Agreements

- The Women's Policy Office should work collaboratively with Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council to re-evaluate and rewrite the service agreements for provincial core funding to reflect the work of Women's Centres / Councils in both service delivery and equality-seeking advocacy and lobbying. Both kinds of work must be seen as valuable and necessary to improving the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Statistical Reporting

- The Women's Policy Office should work collaboratively with Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to re-evaluate the statistical reporting required by Government (i.e., Client Data Registry). We should work together to create a process and reporting format which is reflective of all the work being done by Women's Centres / Councils, including both service delivery and equality-seeking advocacy work at both individual and systemic levels, and which fits both our needs.
- The Women's Policy Office needs to compile and disseminate current statistics that reflect the true reality of the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador, including those collected by front-line, equality-seeking women's organizations such as Women's Centres / Councils, Transition Houses, Shelters, etc.

Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

- The Minister and her staff at the Women's Policy Office should undertake training to deepen their understanding of feminist principles and how to work through feminist practices and processes. One recommendation is to review the *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* guidebook
- The Status of Women Minister should make it a priority to visit and interact with each Status of Women Council Board and Women's Centre throughout the province on an annual basis. This would assist her understanding of the grassroots reality of the issues and concerns impacting on women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- The Minister should ensure that all future appointments to the Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women continue to be drawn from feminist, equality-seeking women's organizations throughout the province.

Collaboration

- The Women's Policy Office should develop an annual initiative to bring representatives of Status of Women Councils, Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council together with the Women's Policy Office to enhance our shared understanding of feminist process and develop collaborative, respectful processes for working together to advance the status of women.
- The Status of Women Ministry and the Women's Policy Office need to find ways to reestablish the connection to / with Shelters and Transition Houses, which are currently dealt with separately through the Department of Health and Community Services, to assist with moving our shared, feminist equality-seeking agenda forward.

Gender Inclusive Analysis

- Government needs to apply gender inclusive analysis within the development, implementation and evaluation of all government policies, decisions, appointments, organizations, plans, legislation, programs and budget allocations.
- Government should continue to push to increase gender balance and gender equity on all boards, agencies and commissions.
- Government should work with Women's Councils / Centres, the Provincial Advisory Council and provincial women's equality-seeking organizations to hear our "voice of experience" on women's issues and develop a collaborative process for moving gender inclusive analysis forward within government.

Outreach

- The Women's Policy Office and Provincial Advisory Council should work in partnership with Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to expand our outreach work and assist in the development and establishment of other Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres throughout the province.

Funding

- The Women's Policy Office and provincial government should provide funding to develop a collaborative process with Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council to hold an annual meeting.
- Government should ensure that childcare funding is provided so that women can attend these and other meetings.

- Government should provide funding to establish an Aboriginal Women's Advisory Council for strengthened representation for Labrador and Aboriginal women's issues.

Strategies and Recommendations to Status of Women Canada and the Federal Government

Funding

- The federal government should reinstate federal funding to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and similar women's equality-seeking / advocacy organizations to provide a national voice on women's issues.
- Status of Women Canada should provide funding to hold yearly meetings with women's organizations throughout the province and country.
- Status of Women Canada should provide childcare subsidies so women can attend these and other meetings.
- Status of Women Canada should provide core funding to Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres for equality-seeking advocacy work.
- Status of Women Canada should also broaden its scope for project funding to include provincially funded organizations.

Connecting to Women's Organizations

- The Status of Women department should become more focused on the grassroots equality-seeking work and mandates of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council.
- The federal Minister Responsible for Status of Women should visit Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres and the Provincial Advisory Council in this province to learn about our work and the reality of the issues impacting on women in our communities.

Five Demands for Women's Equality in Canada

- The federal government should immediately implement the *Five Demands for Women's Equality in Canada* in full.

Federal Political Parties

- During the next election, all federal political parties should ensure women's equality is in their political platforms, and make women's issues an important part of the election.

Gender inclusive Analysis

- Status of Women Canada and the federal government need to implement gender inclusive analysis across all government departments.
- The federal government should continue to push to achieve gender equity and gender balance on all boards, agencies and commissions.

Strategies and Recommendations to Provincial Women’s Equality-Seeking Organizations

Networking and Collaboration

- Provincial equality-seeking women’s organizations need to continue to work collaboratively with Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres to discuss the increasing separation of our advocacy work from our service delivery work, and strategize around how we can overcome this divide.
- Provincial women’s equality-seeking organizations should continue to network and connect with us via conference calls, listserv and email groups to hold “feminist discussion sessions.”
- The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women should support the need for a Labrador or Aboriginal Women’s Advisory Council.
- The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women should continue to build and maintain strong connections to Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres.
- The Provincial Advisory Council and Women’s Policy Office should work in partnership with Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres to expand our outreach work and assist in the development and establishment of other Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres throughout the province.
- The Provincial Advisory Council should work with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to ensure that all future appointments to the Board of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women continue to be drawn from feminist, equality-seeking women’s organizations throughout the province.

Strategies and Recommendations to Ourselves as Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres

The following strategies and recommendations were developed by Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to move forward within their organizations:

Service Contract Agreements

- We need to ensure that our work plans that accompany the service contract agreements are reflective of all the work that we do in our Women's Councils / Centres, including our equality-seeking advocacy work.
- We need to work collaboratively with the Women's Policy Office and Provincial Advisory Council to re-evaluate and rewrite the service agreements for provincial core funding to reflect the work of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres in both service delivery and equality-seeking advocacy and lobbying. The service agreement must be true to the work that we do, and both kinds of work must be seen as valuable and necessary to improving the status of women in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Statistical Reporting

- Coordinators of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres should work collaboratively to share and compare the statistical reporting forms used at different Councils / Centres. Each could review the format, and add comments or improvements to develop a common reporting process. The end result could be offered to the Women's Policy Office as the report to serve both their and our needs.

Organizational Development

- Our organizations should research charitable status and pursue this as an avenue by which to access additional funds.
- We need to create job descriptions that reflect our focus on "equality-seeking" work; employers must allow time to work on this aspect of the job.
- We should review our mandate, constitution and bylaws for improvement in terms of reflecting our feminist vision and values and share these with other boards.

Board Development / Recruitment

- We need to recruit feminist women for our boards. We can identify feminist women at specific events such as International Women's Day. The strategies we employ will depend on our board composition.

- Another strategy is to implement provincial equality-seeking board training on a yearly or other basis if not too costly.
- We need to do “feminist” education with our board members. We need to be more clear about who can become a board member, and set expectations, criteria and guidelines around this.
- We should create an education kit and orientation process for new board members.
- We need to set visioning sessions for boards and staff of Women’s Centres / Status of Women Councils, and these must be held on a regular basis.
- We need to recruit board members who are feminists or open to feminist principles (closet feminists). We should consider what qualities the board needs to have in terms of skills and background (e.g., legal, union, media background) and what is needed to complement the existing board. As women resign from the board, we will then know what qualities need to be sought out / replaced in the new board.
- We should review our mandate, constitution and bylaws for improvement (in terms of reflecting our feminist vision and values) and share these with other boards.
- We need to recruit women attached to shelters (board members, staff) onto our status of Women Council / Women’s Centre boards to act as shelter liaisons. Shelter workers need to be able to connect the values of feminism to issues of violence and inequality, and understand the relationship between feminism and shelter work.

Re/Connecting to Our Feminist Values

- We need to begin back at the basics with *Feminism: Our Basis of Unity* to reconnect to our equality-seeking principles and work, and undertake a values assessment of our Board and our community.
- We should build processes into our Council / Centre regular meeting agendas. For example, address one feminist principle per board meeting, and regularly check in with the board in the interim.
- In developing our meeting agendas and action planning, we need to prioritize our work and discussions around feminism. For example, put it up front on the meeting agenda to ensure that we have time for real discussion and it doesn’t fall off the agenda.
- We need to decide not to be governed by the fear of repercussions when challenging government policies around decisions that are harmful to women and/or our organizations, and move forward based on our feminist values and beliefs and what we know to be true.
- We need to bring feminism into other groups and organizations. For example, shelter workers need to be able to connect the values of feminism to issues of violence and inequality, and understand the relationship between feminism and shelter work.
- We also need to individually bring feminism back to our communities by incorporating our feminist philosophy at home and in discussions with our children.

Advocacy and Lobbying

- We need to return to our earlier practices of holding an annual lobby or provincial women's conference. We need to choose one or more key issues throughout the province.
- Within our Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres, we should set hours or choose days purely for advocacy work, and limit the amount of direct services we deliver on a day-to-day basis.
- We need to talk about advocacy and how we're doing, and how to move our equality-seeking agenda forward.
- We may need to advocate for the establishment of new Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres in areas such as the Burin Peninsula, Northern Peninsula and Labrador.
- We need to hold an actual "old fashioned" lobby on one key/critical issue. Provincially, we should consider holding a lobby on the issue of having the freedom to choose our own agenda as women's equality-seeking organizations.
- We should be prepared that there may be backlash if we adopt a strong position that challenges government.

Coalition Building and Collaboration

- We should form a collective of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to address common concerns with a united front to the province.
- Status of Women Council / Women's Centre Coordinators should meet to explore and develop a collaborative working process during the Port Blandford meetings at the end of May.
- During the Feminist Coalition meetings in Port Blandford, Status of Women Councils / Women's Centre Coordinators should arrange a caucus room to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern, and develop a collaborative process for continuing to work together in the future.
- We should continue our discussions among Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres by email and conference call. Women could set a monthly date and time for working together and getting the collaborative process going.
- We should work together to undertake comparison of our work plans as they relate to the service agreements, and develop a consistent strategy amongst Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres for reflecting advocacy work at both the individual and systemic levels.
- We need to meet with each other at least twice a year, and also select meeting locations in different regions of the province.

- We need to seek funding from the Women’s Policy Office and provincial government to hold yearly meetings of Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres throughout the province.
- We need to seek childcare funding so women can attend these meetings.

Community Outreach

- We need to expand our outreach work and assist in the establishment of other Status of Women Councils / Women’s Centres via the Provincial Advisory Council or Women’s Policy Office.
- We should insert / assert ourselves into other boards, agencies and committees.
- We need to identify individuals in mental health, HRSDC, HRLE, addictions services, Victim Services, Legal Aid, RCMP, RNC, etc. as a liaison / “go to” person in government agencies rather than dealing broadly with the agencies in general or referring women.
- We should use the annual International Women’s Day dinner as a good opportunity to talk about what is feminism and to share feminist stories. This could be a coordinated event held throughout the province with feminism as our central theme. As a result of these meetings, we will set a mandate to bring home and time this issue with our next International Women’s Day for 2006.
- We need to continuously bring feminism into other groups and organizations.

Educating and Mentoring

- We need to educate and support each other. For example, we need to get together to hold discussions and examine issues with our boards.
- We need to develop appropriate initiatives to build long-term mentoring. We can do this work at our Annual General Meetings using the feminist principles of unity as the basis of our equity values.
- We need to find ways to appreciate the benefits of mentoring other women.

Self Care Strategies

- It is important that we practice self-care without guilt. We should schedule time for self care.
- As Women’s Centres / Councils, we need to choose a few issues to work on at a time so as to not become burned out or overwhelmed. We need to know when to choose our battles.
- We need to encourage and support each other in order to stay healthy as organizations and as women.

- We need to provide support to each other in our work roles.

The following strategies and recommendations were developed by Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to move forward within Provincial Government:

Provincial Status of Women Minister

- We need to make it a priority of the Status of Women Minister to visit and interact with Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres throughout the province in order to better understand and articulate the reality of the issues and concerns impacting on women in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- We should invite Minister Burke to visit each of our Women's Councils / Centres as a "learning trip." This would provide her with the opportunity to learn what we're doing, see what we're doing, and value what we're doing. When the Minister visits, Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres must set our own agenda for discussion to ensure our concerns and issues are heard and addressed.
- As Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres, we must work together to speak to the Minister to ensure that she is hearing us, and educate her about the issues and decisions negatively impacting on women in our communities.
- We should ensure that we applaud the good work of the Minister and Government and support decisions that advance the status of women.
- We must also let the Minister know when we feel that our meetings with her have not been productive or we feel we have not been heard.
- As Women's Councils / Centres, we also need to provide a "big picture" feminist or gender inclusive analysis to government and community and make heard our "voice of experience" on women's issues.

The following strategies and recommendations were developed by Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to move forward within the Federal Government:

Status of Women Canada

- We need to campaign to get the Status of Women portfolio more focused on the equality-seeking work and mandates of Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres.
- We will invite the federal Minister Responsible for Status of Women to visit Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres when she is in the province to learn about our work and the reality of the issues impacting on women in our communities.

Federal Funding

- We need to campaign for the reinstatement of federal funding to the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC) and similar women's equality-seeking / advocacy organizations.
- We need to seek funding from Status of Women Canada to hold yearly meetings with women's organizations throughout the province and country.
- We need to demand childcare so women can attend meetings.
- We need to insist on core funding for Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres from Status of Women Canada. We need to write letters to the federal government advocating for core funding.
- We need to advocate for Status of Women Canada to broaden its scope for project funding.
- Federally, we should hold a lobby around the issue of core funding. We should also consider the implications of having funding for advocacy split or separate from our funding for service delivery. For example, what if the province funds services while the federal government provides money for our advocacy work? This disconnect is worrisome; how do we separate the pieces of work which are interconnected and intertwined?

Federal Election

- During the next election, when federal candidates come to our door campaigning, we should talk to them about the importance of women's issues and make sure women's equality is in their political platforms.
- We should ensure that we go to political debates and ask questions of candidates.
- We should make sure that women's issues are an important part of the election.

Gender inclusive Analysis

- We need to insist on the use of gender inclusive analysis, and push Status of Women Canada and the federal government to implement it across government departments.
- We need to continue to push all levels of government to increase gender balance and gender equity on all boards, agencies and commissions.

The following strategies and recommendations were developed by Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to move forward within provincial women's equality-seeking organizations:

Provincial Women's Organizations

- We should work collaboratively with provincial equality-seeking women's organizations to discuss the increasing separation of our advocacy work from our service delivery work, and strategize around how we can overcome this divide.
- We need to find ways to reestablish the connection to the Status of Women Ministry and the Women's Policy Office with Shelters and Transition Houses, which are currently dealt with separately through the Department of Health and Community Services, to assist with moving our shared, equality-seeking agenda forward.
- We should continue to network with our sister organizations in community and provincially via conference calls, listserv and email groups and hold "feminist discussion sessions."
- We need to state the need for a stronger Labrador presence for the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and encourage more funding for women in Labrador.
- We should continue to build and maintain a strong connection with the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.
- Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres should continue to work in partnership with the Provincial Advisory Council and Women's Policy Office to expand our outreach work and assist in the establishment of other Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres throughout the province.
- We need to keep building the momentum toward the Feminist Coalition meeting at the end of May.

The following strategies and recommendations were developed by Status of Women Councils / Women's Centres to move forward within national women's equality-seeking organizations:

National Women's Organizations

- We should continue to build connections to and support national organizations with whom we share a common equality-seeking agenda, such as the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and the National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL).

- We need to network and develop stronger connections with our sister organizations federally and globally via conference calls, listserv and email groups and hold “feminist discussion sessions.”
- We should continuously develop connections to, and network with, other groups who share a social justice mandate.

“Feminism as a worldview challenges male-female relationships. It challenges roles. It challenges institutions as we know them. The rise in the consciousness of women is changing social expectations, changing attitudes, changing systems.”

Marie Ryan
The Lantern