

November 17, 2024

Matt Barter



Dear Matt Barter:

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 (the Act)** [WGE/41/2024]

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On November 4, 2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE) received your request for access to the following records:

**All briefing materials prepared for the Deputy Minister and Minister for the month of October 2024.**

I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been made by the Deputy Minister for WGE to provide access to some of the requested information.

Access to the remaining records, and/or information contained within the records, has been refused in accordance with the following exception(s) to disclosure, as specified in the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 (the Act)**:

**S.29(1)(a) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses, or policy options developed by or for a public body or minister.**

As required by 8(2) of the Act, we have severed information that is unable to be disclosed and have provided you with as much information as possible. In accordance with your request for a copy of the records, the appropriate copies have been enclosed.

The Act requires us to provide an advisory response within 10 days of receiving the request. As this request has been completed prior to day 10, this letter also serves as our Advisory Response.

Please be advised that you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the processing of your access request, as set out in section 42 of the Act (a copy of this section has been enclosed for your reference). A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner.

The address and contact information of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
2 Canada Drive  
P. O. Box 13004, Stn. A  
St. John's, NL. A1B 3V8

Telephone: (709) 729-6309  
Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309  
Email: [commissioner@oipc.nl.ca](mailto:commissioner@oipc.nl.ca)

You may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court within 15 business days after you receive the decision of the public body, pursuant to section 52 of the Act (a copy of this section has been enclosed for your reference).

Please be advised that this request may be published on the [Completed Access to Information Requests](#) website. Requests will be posted when possible, but no sooner than three business days after a response is sent electronically, or five business days where a response is sent by mail. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online. Additional details regarding the process for publishing requests online can be found [here](#).

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me by email at [\*\*PatriciaMiah@gov.nl.ca\*\*](mailto:PatriciaMiah@gov.nl.ca) or telephone at **709-729-1497**.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Miah*

Patricia Miah  
ATIPP Coordinator

## **Access or correction complaint**

**42.** (1) A person who makes a request under this Act for access to a record or for correction of personal information may file a complaint with the commissioner respecting a decision, act or failure to act of the head of the public body that relates to the request.

(2) A complaint under subsection (1) shall be filed in writing not later than 15 business days

- (a) after the applicant is notified of the decision of the head of the public body, or the date of the act or failure to act; or
- (b) after the date the head of the public body is considered to have refused the request under subsection 16 (2).

(3) A third party informed under section 19 of a decision of the head of a public body to grant access to a record or part of a record in response to a request may file a complaint with the commissioner respecting that decision.

(4) A complaint under subsection (3) shall be filed in writing not later than 15 business days after the third party is informed of the decision of the head of the public body.

(5) The commissioner may allow a longer time period for the filing of a complaint under this section.

(6) A person or third party who has appealed directly to the Trial Division under subsection 52 (1) or 53 (1) shall not file a complaint with the commissioner.

(7) The commissioner shall refuse to investigate a complaint where an appeal has been commenced in the Trial Division.

(8) A complaint shall not be filed under this section with respect to

- (a) a request that is disregarded under section 21 ;
- (b) a decision respecting an extension of time under section 23 ;
- (c) a variation of a procedure under section 24 ; or
- (d) an estimate of costs or a decision not to waive a cost under section

26.

(9) The commissioner shall provide a copy of the complaint to the head of the public body concerned.

### **Direct appeal to Trial Division by an applicant**

**52.** (1) Where an applicant has made a request to a public body for access to a record or correction of personal information and has not filed a complaint with the commissioner under section 42, the applicant may appeal the decision, act or failure to act of the head of the public body that relates to the request directly to the Trial Division.

(2) An appeal shall be commenced under subsection (1) not later than 15 business days:

- (a) after the applicant is notified of the decision of the head of the public body, or the date of the act or failure to act; or
- (b) after the date the head of the public body is considered to have refused the request under subsection 16 (2).

(3) Where an applicant has filed a complaint with the commissioner under section 42 and the commissioner has refused to investigate the complaint, the applicant may commence an appeal in the Trial Division of the decision, act or failure to act of the head of the public body that relates to the request for access to a record or for correction of personal information.

(4) An appeal shall be commenced under subsection (3) not later than 15 business days after the applicant is notified of the commissioner's refusal under subsection 45 (2).

**WGE/41/2024  
List of Briefing Materials  
October 2024**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Type</b>
Meeting with Unifor	Meeting Note
Abortion	Key Message
Bay St. George Status of Women Council/Women Centre	Key Message
Changing Gender Policy	Key Message
Community Violence Prevention Grants Program	Key Message
Gender-Based Analysis+	Key Message
Gender Affirming Care	Key Message
Gender Diversity in Politics	Key Message
Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Leadership	Key Message
Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation	Key Message
Impact of Minimum Wage Increase on Women	Key Message
Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program	Key Message
Provincial Indigenous Women’s Reconciliation Council	Key Message
IVF Services	Key Message
Menstrual Equity	Key Message

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	Key Message
Operational Funding	Key Message
Pay Equity and Pay Transparency	Key Message
Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity	Key Message
Red Dress Alert System	Key Message
Repeal and Replacement of the Status of Women Advisory Council Act	Key Message
Violence Prevention	Key Message
Women and Gender-Diverse Health Issues	Key Message

**Meeting Note**  
**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Meeting with Unifor, Monday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 2:00pm**  
**Department of Justice and Public Safety Boardroom, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, East Block**

**Attendees:**

Honourable Pam Parsons, Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality  
Honourable Bernard Davis, Minister of Justice and Public Safety  
Jennifer Murray, Atlantic Regional Director, Unifor  
Doretta Strickland, NL representative – Unifor Atlantic Women’s Committee; FFAW Member  
Adele Jackman, Treasurer of our Atlantic Regional Council Executive, St. John’s, NL  
Lee Pearce, President of Local 410, St. John’s, NL  
Candice Ennis-Williams, Deputy Minister, Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE)  
Mike Noseworthy, ADM of Court and Corporate Services (JPS)  
Emily Christy, Senior Program and Policy Development Specialist, (WGE)

**Purpose of Meeting:**

- To discuss the intersection of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) legislation and Unifor’s advocacy efforts, and potential next steps in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Background:**

- Unifor has requested a meeting with the Ministers Responsible for WGE and JPS to discuss work related to IPV, including legislation in other jurisdictions, the declaration of IPV as an epidemic, and Unifor’s ongoing related programming.
- On September 12, 2024, Nova Scotia declared IPV an epidemic, following recommendations from its 2023 Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) on the 2020 Nova Scotia mass shooting, and passed the **Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act** following Unifor’s advocacy.
- This follows the Government of Ontario announcement on April 10, 2024, that it would support the provincial NDP’s Bill 173 (Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act) to recognize IPV as an epidemic in Ontario. This recognition encourages the use of public health framework to support survivors and emphasizes comprehensive and multi-sectoral responses to IPV.
- Through its Women’s Advocate Program, Unifor has supported workers facing IPV by providing workplace-based assistance and resources. The program connects individuals with legal, financial, and emotional support, offering a comprehensive safety net for victims.

**Agenda item #1: Unanimous passing of IPV legislation in Nova Scotia, and Ontario’s progress**

- Nova Scotia’s unanimous passing of legislation declaring IPV an epidemic allows it to be treated as a public health crisis, emphasizing prevention, resource allocation, and survivor support.
- Similarly, Ontario’s Bill 173 seeks to recognize IPV as an epidemic and will allow a public health framework to support survivors.
- Both provinces are addressing the widespread impacts of IPV through legislative action, driven by rising IPV rates and increasing advocacy from groups such as Unifor.

**Analysis**

- The MCC’s recommendation was key to Nova Scotia’s legislative response, utilizing a public health framework for IPV, including prevention and survivor support systems.
- Nova Scotia’s IPV rates are high with 30 per cent of women and 22.5 per cent of men experiencing IPV. The legislation reflects a commitment to address these alarming statistics.

- In 2018, 44 per cent of women in Canada reported experiencing some form of IPV in their lifetime, since the age of 15, further promoting legislative action.
- Ontario's bill 173 is progressing with political support. Multiple municipalities (including Toronto and Ottawa) had already declared IPV as an epidemic, pushing for provincial action.
- In 2022, Ontario's IPV shelters reported high occupancy rates with some shelters operating near capacity, emphasizing the pressure on support systems.
- Advocates note that declaring IPV an epidemic in both provinces is leading to stronger legal frameworks, improved public health responses, and greater support for survivors.

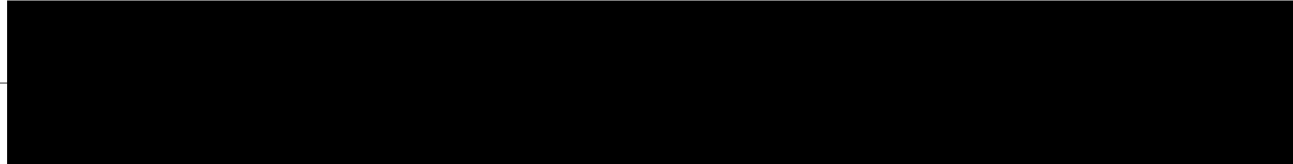
### **Newfoundland and Labrador**

- Newfoundland and Labrador had the fourth highest provincial IPV rate in Canada in 2022, at 421 per 100,000, higher than the national average (346). Family violence rates are also higher, particularly in rural areas, at 415 versus 347 per 100,000, ranking fifth in Canada.



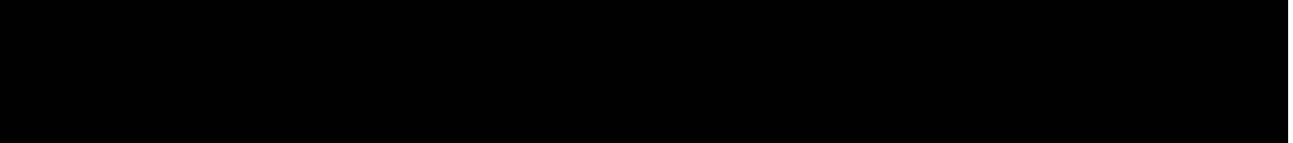
s.29(1)(a)

### Potential Speaking Points



s.29(1)(a)

### Proposed Actions



s.29(1)(a)

### **Agenda Item #2: The Nova Scotia Mass Casualty Commission (MCC) Recommendation to declare IPV an epidemic, and calls from other advocacy groups**

- In 2023, the MCC recommended that IPV be declared an epidemic. Advocacy groups, including Unifor, have echoed this call, pushing for stronger legislative actions across Canada.

### Analysis

- The MCC concluded that systemic IPV contributed to the 2020 Nova Scotia mass shooting, emphasizing a need for a coordinated and large-scale response to prevent further tragedies. Declaring IPV an epidemic is seen as essential for mobilizing resources, enhancing legal frameworks, and raising public awareness.
- Advocacy groups, such as Unifor and the Canadian Femicide Observatory, support this recommendation, calling for comprehensive legislative reforms. These reforms would expand Emergency Protection Orders, improve coordination between law enforcement and healthcare providers, and offer better protections for victims.
- In 2022, an average of one woman or girl was killed every two days in Canada due to IPV. Newfoundland and Labrador's IPV rate of 421 per 100,000 is alarmingly high, further supporting the need for stronger risk factor identification and prevention measures.
- Declaring IPV an epidemic could allow governments to address it using a public health framework, as other crises, like COVID-19, have been managed.

Potential Speaking Points

s.29(1)(a)

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

Proposed Actions

[Redacted]

s.29(1)(a)

**Agenda item #3: Unifor’s connection to this issue through the Women’s Advocate Program, equity initiatives, and advocacy to protect the health and safety of all workers.**

- Unifor, Canada’s largest private-sector union, has been a strong advocate for worker safety, gender equity, and support for individuals affected by IPV. Its Women’s Advocate Program provides workplace-based support for employees experiencing IPV, and Unifor’s broader equity initiatives focus on creating safer, more inclusive workplaces.

Analysis

- Unifor’s Women’s Advocate Program, launched in 1990s, provides trained workplace advocates, who confidentially support workers experiencing IPV by connecting them to counseling, legal support, and safety planning.
- As of 2024, the program has over 400 women’s advocates in workplaces across Canada, providing critical support to thousands of employees annually.
- Data from the Canadian Women’s Foundation shows that two-thirds of people in Canada (65 per cent) know a woman who has faced emotional, physical, or sexual assault and 69 per cent of women know a woman who has faced assault, demonstrating the widespread nature of the issue and the need for employer-based interventions.
- Unifor’s equity initiatives include policies promoting gender equity, zero-tolerance for harassment, and training on preventing gender-based violence.
- Unifor has been a leader in advocating for stronger legislative protections for IPV victims. In Ontario, its efforts contributed to policies under the **Occupational Health and Safety Act**, ensuring IPV survivors have access to resources and protections at work.
- Research shows that 81.9 per cent of IPV survivors report negative reports on their work performance. Unifor’s program provides a safe channel for IPV victims to seek help while maintaining their employment, reducing the economic impact of IPV on survivors.

Potential Speaking Points

[Redacted]

Proposed Actions

s.29(1)(a)

[Redacted]

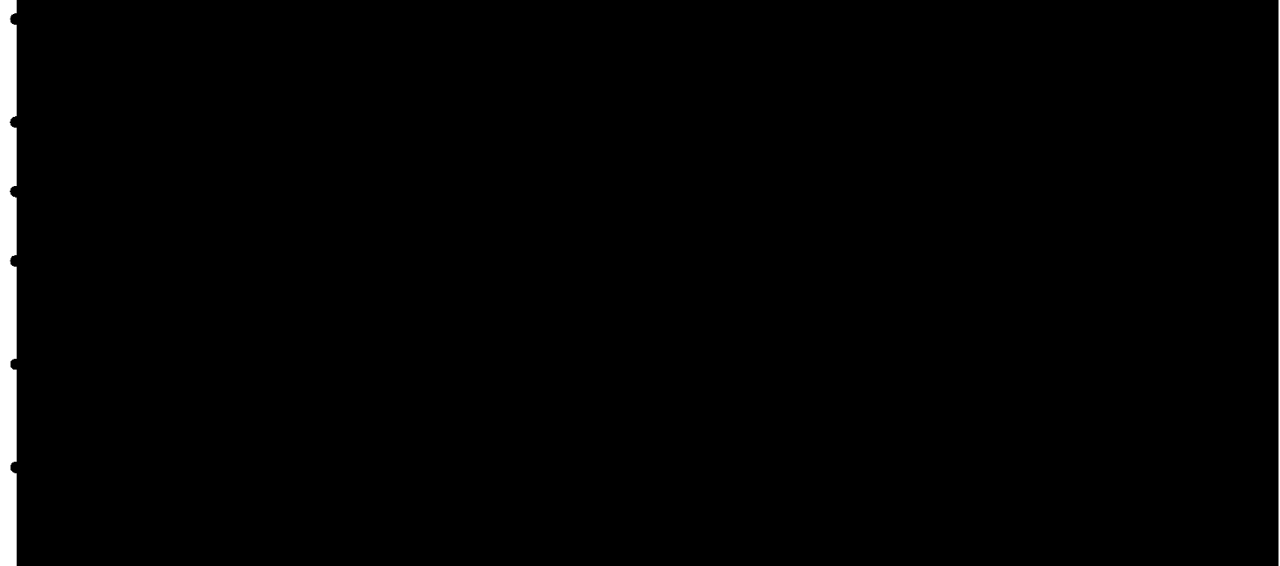
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**Agenda item #4: Why is declaring an IPV an epidemic important?**

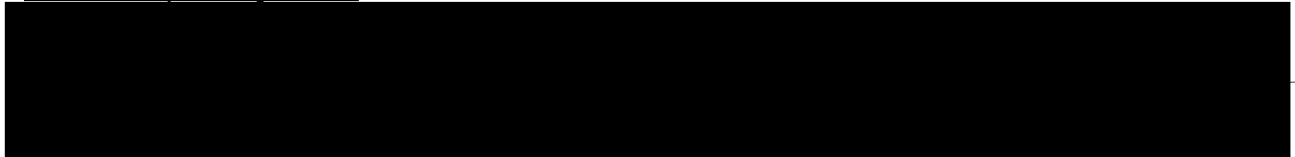
- Advocates argue that recognizing IPV as a public health crisis will allow governments to better prioritize resource allocation, enhance legal protections, and implement preventive measures more effectively.

Analysis

s.29(1)(a)

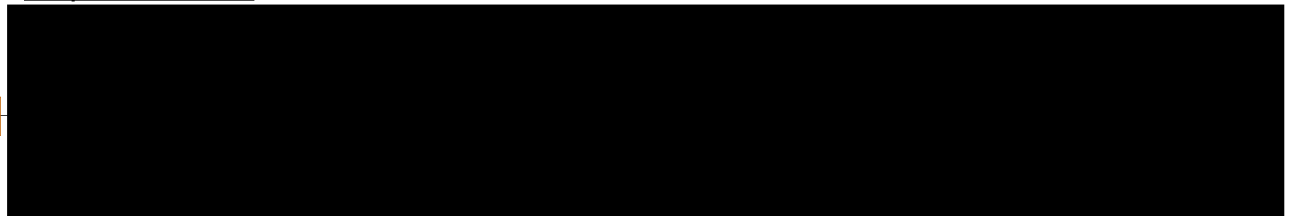


Potential Speaking Points



s.29(1)(a)

Proposed Actions

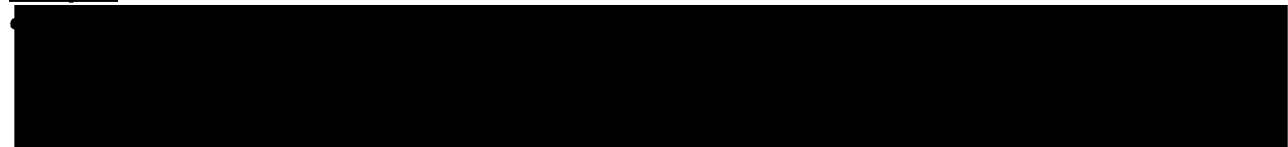


s.29(1)(a)

**Agenda item #5 Next Steps**

- Newfoundland and Labrador continues to consider its next steps. These may include enhancing its legislative framework, allocating further resources to support services, and adopting a comprehensive public health response to IPV in the province.

Analysis



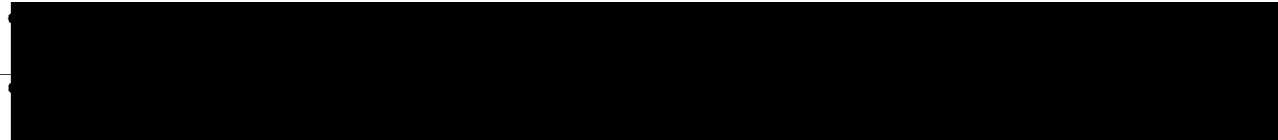
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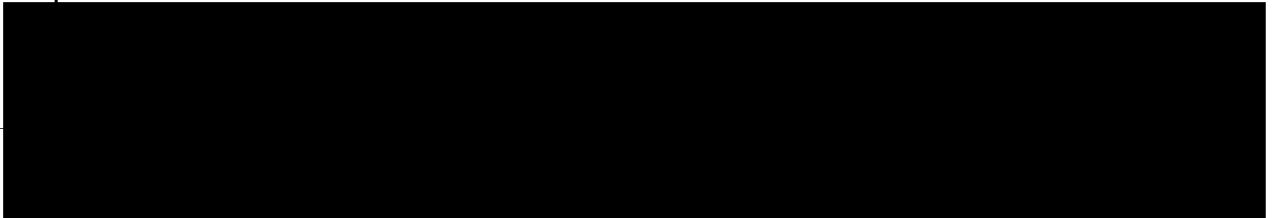
**Potential Speaking Points**

s.29(1)(a)



**Proposed Actions**

s.29(1)(a)



**Prepared/Approved by:** F.Chowdhury/ E.Christy/C. Ennis-Williams

October 22, 2024

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality**

### **Abortion**

October 31, 2024

#### **Summary**

Abortion is legal in Newfoundland and Labrador (and Canada), and advocates have been calling for increased access to abortion services.

In June 2022, the United States Supreme Court overturned the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision of 1973, in which the Court ruled that the Constitution of the United States generally protected a right to have an abortion.

Many states have since implemented abortion bans. Legal chaos is occurring as injunctions against individual state laws are being lifted and pre-*Roe* bans are being interpreted. In a few states, new injunctions are being issued before laws can go into effect.

#### **Anticipated Questions**

- How can individuals access abortion services in Newfoundland and Labrador?
- What abortion services are available to individuals in rural areas of the province?

#### **Key Messages**

- Abortion rights, fertility and reproductive health are fundamental rights for women and gender diverse people across Canada.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, abortion services are covered by MCP.
- The Athena Clinic, located in St. John's, performs 95 per cent of abortions carried out in the province.
- The Athena Clinic also operates monthly satellite abortion clinics in different areas of the province.
- We commend organizations that support women and gender diverse individuals to access the healthcare services they need.
- Eliminating abortion services will not stop abortions; it will just stop safe abortion services.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Bay St. George Status of Women Council/Women Centre**  
October 24, 2024

**Summary**

Bay St. George Status of Women Council is a non-profit organization incorporated in 1987, mandated to help and improve economic and social conditions for women, especially rural women, in the Bay St. George/Stephenville area, which has a population of approximately 20,000 people. On October 23, 2024, the organization's Board of Directors posted a message to social media informing the public that the women's centre and Karen's Place (a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence) will be closed until further notice, citing significant maintenance and staffing issues.

**Anticipated Questions**

- Was the Provincial Government aware of the issues at the Bay St. George Status of Women Council/Women's Centre?
- What is the Provincial Government doing to support women and gender-diverse people in the Bay St. George/Stephenville area?

**Key Messages**

- Our government **appreciates the many community-based agencies** that are on the frontlines providing important services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- We are concerned with this closure's impact on services in the area and have reached out to the organization's Board of Directors.

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s.29(1)(a)

- Budget 2024 provided the Office of Women and Gender Equality with **close to \$3.5M in core operational funding to women's, anti-violence, and equity-seeking organizations.**
- There are also **three other organizations that serve women and gender-diverse people** experiencing violence or requiring supports within the Bay St. George/Stephenville Area.
  - **Violence Prevention Southwest** located in Stephenville, receives \$85,767 in core operational funding from the Office of Women and Gender Equality.
  - **Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network** located in Stephenville, receives \$133,917 in core operational funding from the Office of Women and

Gender Equality. This organization just recently opened a shelter for Indigenous women and children fleeing domestic violence.

- **Community Education Network** located in Stephenville, receives core operational funding from Children, Seniors and Social Development.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Changing Gender Policy**  
October 8, 2024

**Summary**

On February 1, 2024, **Alberta** Premier Danielle Smith announced a new policy, “Preserving choice for children and youth,” which requires parental consent for students 15 and under to change names or pronouns, while only notification is required for 16- and 17-year-olds. The policy also includes a ban on gender reassignment surgeries for those 17 and under, a ban on puberty blockers and hormone therapy for those 15 and under and introduces counseling for parents and transgender youth. K-12 teaching materials must be approved by the Education Ministry.

In August 2023, **Saskatchewan’s** Ministry of Education introduced a policy requiring parental permission for students under 16 to use a preferred name or pronouns. The policy is under legal scrutiny for potentially violating the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, which protects gender identity.

In 2023, **New Brunswick** revised its gender identity policy mandating parental consent for students under 16 to change their names or pronouns at school. The policy is currently facing legal challenges.

In the **United States**, the Biden-Harris administration released the first-ever National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality in 2021. In September 2024, a federal appeals court upheld an Alabama policy requiring proof of gender-reassignment surgery to change the sex designation on driver’s licenses.

**Anticipated Questions**

- What is government doing to make this province inclusive for all residents?
- How is government ensuring that transgender and gender-diverse youth have access to appropriate healthcare services, given the recent restrictions on gender-affirming healthcare for minors in other provinces?
- How is government ensuring that transgender and gender-diverse youth have access to appropriate healthcare services, given the recent restrictions on gender-affirming healthcare for minors in other provinces?
- What steps is government taking to protect the rights of transgender and gender-diverse students in schools, considering the legal challenges faced by similar policies in other provinces?

**Key Messages**

- The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is deeply committed to building an inclusive province where all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender

identity, feel safe, respected, and valued. We recognize that our strength as a province comes from our diversity.

- We believe that accessible healthcare services for transgender and gender-diverse people are essential. Our government ensures that transgender individuals, including youth, can engage in private, informed discussions with their healthcare providers about their needs, without fear of barriers to access.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality works with the Department of Health and Community Services to provide equitable, responsive services to meet the unique healthcare needs of transgender and gender-diverse individuals.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, we take the rights of transgender and gender-diverse students seriously. Under the Safe and Caring Schools Policy, schools ensure welcoming and inclusive environments for all students. District and school staff work closely with students to determine the most appropriate ways to respect their gender identity, gender expression, and preferred pronouns, ensuring a safe space for their self-expression.

### **Healthcare Key Messages**

- Accessible healthcare services for the transgender community requires the continued freedom for patients and their families to have private and informed discussions with their physicians about individual healthcare needs.
- We have met with advocates from the transgender community to learn about their experiences with our healthcare system.
- In fall 2023 NL Health Services partnered with QuadrangleNL and Lifewise NL to offer a safe space for people over the age of 18 exploring gender identity and gender expression.
- In November 2019, the Provincial Government removed legislative requirements for transition-related surgery to be recommended by professionals at Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto. This has drastically shortened wait times and improved accessibility of care.
- Transgender patients who seek access to hormone replacement therapy may be eligible to have their prescriptions covered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.
- The Provincial Government also completed a review of breast augmentation coverage for transgender people. This review included consultation with numerous relevant stakeholders, including members of the transgender community, with the aim of ensuring that our coverage is responsive and in-line with national and international standards of care. As such, in October 2022, the length of hormone therapy has decreased from 18 to 12 continuous months to meet insurability criteria for transition-related surgery breast augmentation.

### **Education Key Messages (pronouns and gender identity)**

- As per the Provincial Government's Safe and Caring Schools Policy, district and school staffs consult with the student to determine the most appropriate way to reference a student's gender identity, gender expression, name, and related pronoun in the school environment.
- The Safe and Caring Schools Policy recognizes that the school community is responsible for a positive school culture where student, teacher, parent/guardian, and community engagement is encouraged, nurtured and expected.
- It is important for institutions, workplaces, and other public spaces to welcome people with diverse identities, backgrounds, and beliefs.
- Offering space for a student to communicate and express their gender identity in a positive manner and have their pronouns respected creates safer, healthier, and more inclusive classes, schools, and communities.
- Teachers and administrators use a student-centered approach that considers the well-being of the student and many other factors when determining to use a preferred name and gender identity on school documents.
- This province's K-12 curriculum teaches and reinforces messages about inclusivity, mutual respect, and kindness.
- These educational components are important as we grow an equitable province and country based on the social determinants of health and well-being and rooted in a strong sense of belonging.

### **Background Information**

In December 2023, we provided \$890,000 to Quadrangle NL under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. Over the next four years, this funding will support vital education and awareness initiatives tailored to the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, helping to prevent violence and promote inclusivity.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Community Violence Prevention Grants Program**

October 8, 2024

### **Summary**

The Office of Women and Gender Equality has launched a new Community Violence Prevention Grants Program that will see up to \$525,000 distributed to groups and organizations throughout the province in 2024-2025.

### **Anticipated Questions**

- What is the objective of this new grants program?
- Where is the funding coming from for the program?
- How will you determine who receives funding?

### **Key Messages**

- By launching this program, we are taking a critical step towards ensuring the safety and well-being of all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. This program represents our collective commitment to addressing the root causes of violence, providing support for those affected, and fostering safer, stronger communities.
- The program's objectives support targeted and community-driven efforts, led by community partners within Newfoundland and Labrador, to address the complex root causes of gender-based violence, violence against women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, particularly those living in rural areas, and to help reduce underlying risk factors that lead to harm and victimization.
- Funding is made possible through a \$13.6-million, four-year bilateral agreement with Women and Gender Equality Canada under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.
- Projects must be related to community-based violence prevention, to a maximum request of \$50,000.
- Consideration will be given to proposals that focus on:
  - Building community support networks, at the regional and/or municipal levels.
  - Supporting survivors, their families, and their communities.
  - Engaging men and boys in gender-based violence prevention.
  - Ending the normalization of violence within communities.
  - Addressing stigma against gender-based violence.
  - Promoting healing and mental well-being of those impacted by gender-based violence.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Gender-Based Analysis+**

October 29, 2024

### **Summary**

Advocates continue to call for the use of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) in government decision-making.

### **Anticipated Questions**

- How does government use GBA+?
- How has GBA+ training progressed throughout the Public Service?

### **Key Messages**

- All government departments and agencies are mandated to perform GBA+ on their work, which includes policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets.
- From March 2023 to September 2024, 575 public servants have been provided GBA+ training, for a total of 1,250 since 2019. Eighty-five per cent (85%) of those trained were public service employees involved in program, policy, and budget development activities.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality strongly encourages all public servants to complete GBA+ training to support our 'all of government' approach to GBA+.
- Through collaboration with the Public Service Commission's Centre for Learning and Development, GBA+ training is now available to all public servants through the PSEAccess learning platform.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality is further collaborating with the Centre for Learning and Development to develop a GBA+ eLearning tool. This will make GBA+ training more accessible for the Public Service, government agencies, boards and commissions.
- A list of external organizations that have completed training through the Office of Women and Gender Equality include:
  - NL Health Services Procurement
  - Auditor General's Office
  - Municipalities NL
  - The North Atlantic HR Department
  - The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's Public Complaints Commission
  - Association for New Canadians

## **Secondary Messages**

- The Premier included references to the need for GBA+ in all ministerial mandate letters - an indicator of the importance of this practice to our government.
- The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador currently uses the same GBA+ online training tool as our federal counterparts.

## Office of Women and Gender Equality

### Gender Affirming Care

October 31, 2024

#### Summary

In November 2019, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador removed the legislative requirements for transition-related surgery (TRS) to be recommended by professionals at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. A TRS policy was implemented and a TRS prior approval process, which recognized local surgical readiness assessors that are based in the province. To date there are five such assessors.

The Alberta government introduced bills on October 31, 2024 to prohibit minors from receiving certain types of gender-affirming care, require parents be notified when a child wants to use a different name or pronoun in the classroom, and also require that parents opt-in before their children are taught about sex in class. Egale Canada, a national 2SLGBTQ+ group, and Skipping Stone Foundation, an Alberta group supporting trans and gender-diverse youth, responded that they will be taking legal action against the Alberta government bills.

#### Anticipated Question

- What is the government doing to support transgender healthcare needs?

#### Key Messages

- Ensuring equitable access to appropriate healthcare services is an important step toward gender equality and gender inclusivity.
- Our government is committed to ensuring equity, security, and social inclusion for transgender and gender-diverse people.
- We have met with advocates from the transgender community to learn about their experiences with the healthcare system
- Our government will continue to collaborate with Health and Community Services to ensure transgender people can access responsive, equitable services that meet their healthcare needs.
- MCP covers the costs of insured physician services as per the **Medical Care and Hospital Insurance Act**.

#### Background Information

- The insured transition-related surgery (TRS) services below are funded by the province's provincial health insurance plans when a TRS Request for Prior Approval document is completed and approved before the procedure takes place:
  - Breast/chest surgery: mastectomy with chest masculinization, breast augmentation when clinical eligibility criteria are met

- Genital surgery: hysterectomy (uterus removal), orchiectomy (testicles removal), salpingo-oophorectomy (ovaries and fallopian tubes removal).
- Genital reconstruction: vaginoplasty (vagina construction or repair), metoidioplasty (bottom surgery), phalloplasty (penis construction or repair)
- When certain TRS procedures may be unavailable in the province, insured TRS services can be funded by the province's provincial health insurance plans when prior approval is obtained, and the services are provided in a publicly funded facility within Canada. If insured TRS procedures are unavailable in the Canadian publicly funded system, prior approval may be sought for approval for the procedure in a Canadian private facility.
  - Like other specialized insured services that are not available within Newfoundland and Labrador, travel may be required to access TRS services. Because beneficiaries may incur substantial out-of-pocket travel costs, they may be eligible for financial assistance with medical travel and accommodation expenses under existing medical transportation assistance programs.
- The following TRS procedures and related expenses are among those not covered by MCP
  - TRS services received without prior approval from MCP.
  - Facial feminization, liposuction, tracheal shave, and hair transplantation are a few examples of TRS services which are currently not covered by MCP.
  - Cosmetic surgical revisions.
- Eligibility for prior approval for TRS is based on World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care.

## Office of Women and Gender Equality Gender Diversity in Politics

November 6, 2024

### Summary:

In two recent by-elections in the City of St. John's only men were on the slate of candidates. General municipal elections throughout the province are scheduled for October 2025.

### Anticipated Questions:

- In advance of upcoming municipal elections, what is this government doing to promote gender diversity and representation in politics, specifically with respect to running for elected municipal office?

### Key Messages:

- We **need to see more diversity in elected representatives** at all levels of government. I invite all Members of the House to work with us to make sure this happens.
- In **2021 a historic number of women and gender-diverse** Newfoundlanders and Labradorians **put their names forward for election at all levels of government** in our province. This is a very positive step forward.
- Our Office is collaborating with the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs to help put supports in place and work with municipal and community partners to find innovative ways to encourage young women and gender-diverse individuals who are interested in running for elected office.
- I am proud to sit as **one of five women in Cabinet** and applaud the **Premier's continued commitment to having more diverse voices** in key decision-making roles within government.
- Our Office **continues to collaborate with the local chapter of Equal Voice** to find innovative ways to encourage young women and gender-diverse individuals who are interested in running for elected office.
- We **need to see more diversity in elected representatives** at all levels of government. I invite all Members of the House to work with us to make sure this happens.

### Secondary Messages:

We have a number of initiatives to encourage gender diversity and representation in politics:

- Through the consistent application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets, coupled with our efforts to identify and implement action-focused solutions to gender-based

violence, we can, and will, advance the status of women and gender-diverse individuals in our province.

- We led the way to **amend the Standing Orders** of the House of Assembly to **allow infants on the floor of this honorable chamber**.
- We have implemented a **legislature-specific harassment-free workplace policy**.
- We have introduced a **Bill to amend the Elections Act, 1991**.
- The **new Municipal Conduct Act**, which provides clear guidelines for municipal councils, requiring them to establish their own codes of conduct, came into effect on September 1, 2022.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Leadership**  
October 2, 2024

**Summary**

The Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE) is committed to advancing gender equality in our province. A priority for WGE has been the economic security of women and persons discriminated against based on their gender, sex orientation, race, ethnicity, language, culture/religion, education, age, disability, and income. This leads into the broader conversation of leadership which is a key priority for government.

**Anticipated Questions**

- What is the Provincial Government doing to promote the social, economic, cultural, and political status of women and persons discriminated against based on their gender, sex orientation, race, ethnicity, language, culture/religion, education, age, disability, and income?
- Government has Women's Employment Plans, and Gender Equity and Diversity Plans in place for medium and large projects to increase the number of women in skilled trades and address the issue of the gender wage gap.
- WGE has been engaging with community partners and organizations such as Multicultural Women's Organization NL, Equal Voice NL, and Office to Advance Women's Apprenticeship, around the topic of economic development and security.

**Background Information**

- WGE and the provincial chapter of Equal Voice are working to find innovative ways to encourage young women and gender-diverse individuals who are interested in running for elected office.
- In 2023, the Provincial Government proclaimed into force the **Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol Act**, commonly known as Clare's Law, which is aimed at increasing the safety for individuals in intimate relationships who are at risk of violence from their partners.
- The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs provided \$20,000 to the Make Your Mark campaign. The campaign was instrumental in raising awareness around the importance of engagement, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in municipal governance leading.
- Government has been on the forefront of affordable childcare in the country. Government introduced a \$10 per day rate for regulated childcare in 2023.
- Through the work of the Department of Education, government is looking to add nearly 6,000 new spaces by 2025-26 through the pre-Kindergarten program and other initiatives in the Early Learning and Childcare Action Plan.

- Through several policies, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador strives to foster a workplace that is supportive of women within the public service, including flexible work arrangements, parental leave policy, harassment-free workplace policy, and compassionate care leave policy.
- Recognizing the importance of fertility treatments to residents of this province, Government introduced a fertility subsidy program to support individuals on their fertility journey. The subsidy covers fertility treatment at an Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART) clinic within Canada of an individual's choice.
- The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program is in place in three emergency departments - one in Eastern Health and two in Western Health. The program is proving to be successful, and a provincial working group continues its work to develop a plan to provide SANE training across the province and ensure a standardized provincial program.
- IET provides annual funding of \$100,000 to the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (NLOWE) a not-for-profit business organization, focuses on fostering the success of women in business through a network of community-based coordinators, members, clients, and partnerships.
- IET supports techNL with \$100,000 annual operational funding in addition to contribution to various project-based initiatives such as the annual Innovation Week activities. As part of their work plan, techNL advances various initiatives to support women in tech.
- Oceans Advance receives \$100,000 annual partnership funding to advance sector priorities in the ocean technology sector. The organization offers supports and implements initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women working in the ocean's sector.
- Women who wish to train for a career will see an easier path to success thanks to improvements under the Skills Development Program. The program provides financial support, to eligible individuals who are seeking full-time post-secondary training at a public or private training institution, for duration of 12 weeks or greater or short-term training of less than 12 weeks.
- Government is working towards improving the number of women in trades and technology by funding organizations that support women – such as the Office to Advance Women Apprentices and Women in Resource Development Corporation.
- Through the Province's Workforce Innovation Centre, the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills has supported several projects focused on assisting women in entrepreneurship and employment including:
  - **Genesis Centre of Memorial University**, to increase entrepreneurship among women and immigrants in technology.

- **Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology** to assess the effectiveness of their Leadership program and make recommendations to broaden its reach throughout the province.
- **Women in Resource Development Corporation**, to evaluate the impacts of their Employment Assistance Services and Career Development Programming.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation**

October 8, 2024

### **Summary**

In September 2022, the first ever Human Trafficking Charges were laid in Newfoundland and Labrador. In February 2023, Thrive's Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth released a report outlining concerns about the sexual exploitation of youth in this province and calling for increased government support.

### **Anticipated Question**

- What is government doing to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation?

### **Key Messages**

- Violence of any kind, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation, is unacceptable.
- There are two main forms of human trafficking – sex trafficking and labour trafficking.
- Most human trafficking victims are women and girls. According to Statistics Canada, women and girls made up 96 per cent of the victims of human trafficking in Canada between 2011-2021.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE) takes a multi-faceted and evidence-based approach to human trafficking and sexual exploitation that includes working with federal and provincial/territorial counterparts, engaging and supporting relevant stakeholders, and collaborating with other provincial departments such as Justice and Public Safety and Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.
- WGE provides \$60,100 annually to Thrive for its Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth (CASEY) program, and \$142,625 to the St. John's Status of Women Council for its Safe Harbour Outreach Project (SHOP).
- Through funding secured under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, WGE has further provided CASEY with \$45,000 for additional outreach initiatives, and \$36,000 to develop an educational video about youth sexual exploitation.
- The video has not been launched yet, and is being translated into various Indigenous and newcomer languages.
- Government's contributions to SHOP and CASEY clearly demonstrate our ongoing support for the important work being carried out in this province regarding sexual exploitation and sex trafficking.

- CASEY is the only organization in the province with a mandate to address the sexual exploitation of youth.

### **Secondary Messages**

- SHOP provides services to people engaged in sex trade activities in St. John's. Services include peer support, safety and exit planning, crisis support and management, navigating the system of public services, housing support, referrals for health and addictions issues, referrals to educational programs, one-on-one counselling, legal advice, and life development skills, among others.
- Staff from WGE sit on the Federal Working Group for Human Trafficking, including two sub Working Groups on Data and Information.
- WGE also works with staff from other provincial departments such as JPS and IPGS and meets with relevant community organizations in relation to human trafficking and sexual exploitation in this province.
- If anyone believes a child (under age 16) or youth (ages 16 and 17) is being sexually exploited, abused or maltreated, then they have a **Duty to Report** by calling 1-833-552-2368, or 911 if the child or youth is in immediate danger.
- Public Safety Canada's "National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking" expires this year. WGE looks forward to hearing more about the Federal Government's future plans in relation to combatting human trafficking on the national level.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Impact of Minimum Wage Increase on Women**  
October 31, 2024

**Summary**

In May 2022, the Provincial Government released the Minimum Wage Review Committee Report and announced incremental increases to the minimum wage in the province. The report was completed after a comprehensive analysis and stakeholder engagement process, including input from employers, employees, advocacy, labour and employer groups, and the public.

The minimum wage increased to \$15.60 on April 1, 2024.

An August 2024 report released by the Nova Scotia office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (co-authored by Dr. Russell Williams, MUN) stated that the rise in minimum wages over the years has not kept up with cost-of-living increases and is in fact \$10 an hour less than what the Centre estimates is the living wage in any region or city in Atlantic Canada.

**Anticipated Question**

- How does the increase to minimum wage impact women in the province?

**Key Messages**

- Women are overrepresented in the low wage workforce and make up approximately **60 per cent** of minimum wage earners.
- The increase to the minimum wage will have positive effects on women minimum wage earners and will put more money into their pockets.
- Increasing the income level for minimum wages earners helps improve their ability to respond to changes in the cost of living.
- Increasing minimum wage also helps to narrow the gender wage gap. The gender wage gap is the average difference between what men and women are paid.
- Government understands the importance of the minimum wage rate to employees and employers in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Government is aware of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' report on minimum wage and its conclusion that Atlantic Canada's minimum wages are not currently sufficient to meet the cost of living.

## Secondary Messaging

- In response to the rising cost of living, Government has announced a variety of initiatives, programs, and strategies for residents of this province. Some of these include the poverty reduction plan, a new basic income program, housing initiatives, and food insecurity solutions.
- The new three-year poverty reduction plan (released in November 2023) includes reducing childhood poverty by providing additional funding to ensure school lunch programs are available in all Pre-Kindergarten and K-9 schools, expanding the Prenatal-Infant Nutritional Supplement up to age five, and increasing the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit by 300 per cent.
- Government is focused on creating meaningful and sustainable employment through the continuation of the Employment Stability Pilot province-wide and providing enhanced programming to train and connect non-employment insurance eligible individuals to employment.
- Government is implementing a second Basic Income Program targeting people aged 60 to 64 currently in receipt of Income Support and the Community Supports Program through the Department of Health and Community Services.
- In Budget 2024, the Provincial Government announced the construction of over 100 new social housing units in Corner Brook, Central Newfoundland, and Labrador West. This is in addition to ongoing construction of 16 homes in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and 32 homes in the Pleasantville area of St. John's, with a further 40-unit apartment beginning construction in 2025.
- Government has provided \$220,000 to Food First NL to help support its efforts to improve access to nutritious foods. Additionally, Government has partnered with the Maple Leaf Centre for Food Security and together they are providing \$1.8 million to implement an innovative program to improve food access for vulnerable families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## Current minimum wage rates across Canada

### Atlantic Provinces

NL - \$15.60      NS - \$15.20      PEI - \$16.00      NB - \$15.30

### Rest of Canada

QUE - \$15.75      ON - \$17.20      MB - \$15.80      SK - \$15.00  
AB - \$15.00      BC - \$17.40      YK - \$17.59      NWT - \$16.70  
NV - \$19.00

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program**

October 8, 2024

### **Summary**

Fourteen projects have been awarded funding for the 2024-25 Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program, for a total of \$316,583.

### **Anticipated Question**

- Why is the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program important?

### **Key Messages**

- Our government is committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous people to address the complex root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- The 14 projects receiving funding are located throughout the province, including on the west and south coasts, Avalon and Northern Peninsulas, and Labrador.
- Projects receiving funding include initiatives focused on increasing public awareness, education and training, investing in leadership development, building community capacity, and enhancing opportunities for healing.
- In 2023, the signing of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence bilateral agreement gave the Office of Women and Gender Equality an ability to provide additional funding to the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grant Program.
- Since 2005, approximately \$4.2 million in project funding has been awarded to more than 180 culturally appropriate, Indigenous-led violence prevention projects throughout the province.
- It is important to support targeted efforts that are led by Indigenous governments and organizations to prevent violence in communities throughout our province.

### **Secondary Messages**

- Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals experience violence at higher rates than other populations.
- In November 2022, our government announced the establishment of the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council to support efforts related to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality allocated nearly \$3.7 million in new funding via Budget 2024 to support the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence initiatives for women, Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

## **2024 Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program Recipients**

### **AnanauKatiget Tumingit Regional Inuit Women's Association Inc.**

#### **Project – *Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence Prevention Gathering***

A weekend gathering for Inuit teenage girls to educate them on technology-facilitated gender-based violence to prevent the online exploitation of Indigenous women and girls. The gathering will include presentations from violence prevention service providers, and cultural support and guidance from Elders.

**Grant Awarded:** \$27,263

### **Assembly of First Nations – NL Women's Initiative**

#### **Project – *Women's Gathering***

A women's cultural gathering focused on violence prevention through empowering women's leadership. The goal of this gathering is to address barriers to advance and empower Indigenous women leaders to effect positive change and progress.

**Grant Awarded:** \$20,300

### **Benoit's Cove Indian Band Inc.**

#### **Project – *Community Support***

This project is focused on engaging Indigenous men and boys in violence prevention through skill development, confidence building, increasing violence prevention awareness, reconnecting with their culture, and ultimately becoming changemakers.

**Grant Awarded:** \$11,260

### **Empowering Indigenous Women for Stronger Communities**

#### **Project – *Peer Facilitation Training Enhancement***

This project is designed to empower women and gender-diverse individuals in leadership roles, with culturally informed, trauma-aware training, to help deepen trust in the community.

**Grant Awarded:** \$20,384

### **Exploits Native Women's Association**

#### **Project – *Using Our Knowledge to Prevent Violence***

Funding will be used to enable the development and implementation of three violence prevention workshops to address stigma in youth, engage men and boys, and connect individuals to cultural values.

**Grant Awarded:** \$23,250

### **First Light St. John's Friendship Centre**

#### **Project – *Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Inclusion Initiative***

This project will see the establishment of Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer specific services to the Urban Indigenous community, focussing on professional development and cultural knowledge building, enabling access to established programs across Turtle Island (Canada), and providing access to formal training and engagement with Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

**Grant Awarded:** \$24,210

**Flat Bay Band****Project – *K'taqmkuk Restorative Justice Strategy Capacity Enhancement***

This project aims to address violence prevention, with a specific focus on the Indigenous Mi'kmaw communities in the province. Funding will support gatherings, workshops and training sessions, the distribution of educational materials, implementation of mentoring and capacity-building programs, as well as referrals and support services.

**Grant Awarded:** \$24,210

**Mi'kmaw Cultural Foundation****Project – *Four Seasons Four Gatherings***

This initiative is designed to empower Indigenous youth, ages 15 to 30, by deepening their cultural knowledge and strengthening their connections to their heritage at seasonal gatherings with Elders and mentors.

**Grant Awarded:** \$24,210

**Mushuau Innu First Nation****Project – *Indigenous Violence Prevention Project***

This project is designed to address violence against women and girls in the Mushuau Innu First Nation of Natuashish through culturally relevant approaches via dialogue, knowledge sharing and awareness building using healing circles, workshops and education sessions focused on trauma-informed care.

**Grant Awarded:** \$17,500

**Newfoundland Indigenous Peoples Alliance Inc.****Project – *Culture and Connections on the Land***

This project will consist of holding group sessions to connect youth and adults with communities that have limited opportunities to engage in Indigenous wellness and cultural ways. Activities will include a women's retreat, moccasin-making workshops, feather wrapping, craft sessions, medicine walks, foraging workshops, snowshoeing, and hiking.

**Grant Awarded:** \$22,936

**Newfoundland Native Women's Association****Project – *Violence Prevention (Virtual) Resource-Sharing, Information and Engagement***

This project will involve the facilitation of virtual violence prevention information sessions for Indigenous Groups and Organizations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador seeking resources for women, girls, Two-Spirit and gender-diverse people.

**Grant Awarded:** \$22,000

**Northern Peninsula (Mekap'sk) Mi'kmaq Band****Project – *Indigenous Path Forward***

This project is designed to address challenges related to violence against Indigenous populations on the Northern Peninsula. A facilitator will be hired to conduct research

through gatherings and workshops, where data will be collected to complete a report for future capacity-building.

**Grant Awarded:** \$28,810

**NunatuKavut Community Council**

**Project – *Growing our Wellness***

The NunatuKavut Community Council will engage with NunatuKavut Inuit of all ages to develop violence prevention and healing groups. This will include education and skill building for youth to help build self-esteem and self-worth and create and maintain healthy connections with their communities and service providers.

**Grant Awarded:** \$27,500

**Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation**

**Project – *Elder / Community Engagement Project***

This project will use culturally appropriate approaches to preventing violence in the community of Sheshatshiu and includes a week-long gathering to bring Elders and 10 families together to focus on conflict resolution, communication, storytelling, and traditional healing practices.

**Grant Awarded:** \$22,750

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council**  
October 31, 2024

**Summary**

In November 2022, the Provincial Government announced the establishment of the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council to support efforts related to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The creation of such a Council was proposed to Government in July 2022 by the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee as a foundational component of their report, 'Hear Our Voices: MMIWG Policy Recommendations of the First Women of Newfoundland and Labrador'.

Government received a letter from the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee in April 2023 advising of their Council representatives as well as Elder Co-Chairs and the Council's inaugural meeting took place in June 2023.

**Anticipated Question**

- What is the purpose of the Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council?

**Key Messages**

- Violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people will not be tolerated in this province.
- By working in partnership with Indigenous women, their governments and organizations, and listening to their concerns, we will make positive strides together, to prevent violence in our communities.
- The establishment of the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council plays a pivotal role in acknowledging the historical injustices experienced by Indigenous communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Canada.
- The Council brings together leaders, decision makers, and people with lived expertise from Indigenous Governments and Organizations, and the Provincial Government (i.e., WGE, JPS, HCS, IAR, and CSSD).
- I thank the Council members for their continued commitment and work.

**Work of the Reconciliation Council**

To date, members of the Reconciliation Council have received presentations from and provided feedback to:

- Government's Health Transformation Team on Indigenous needs in the healthcare system;
- Members of the Policing Transformation Working Group;
- NL Health Services on Strategies for Advancing Indigenous Health and Cultural Safety; and
- Children, Seniors and Social Development, Child Protection and Supportive Services.

- Met with Indigenous Services Canada and the Regional Violence Prevention Team to discuss opportunities around partnerships with Indigenous women and Two-Spirit organizations and family violence prevention.

## **Background**

- The Reconciliation Council is composed of 11 members, including five Provincial Government representatives and six Indigenous women representatives. There are three Co-Chairs: one appointed to represent government, and two Elders appointed by the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee.
- The first meeting was held in June 2023. Four meetings have been held, with the most recent in May 2024, and the next one scheduled for November 2024.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality provides significant funding to Indigenous organizations annually. This includes:
  - \$25,000 to support the coordination of the annual Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering;
  - \$133,917 in annual core operational funding for the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN);
  - \$316,583 in 2024-2025 for the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program;
  - \$101,317.83 in 2023-24 to each Indigenous Government (for a total amount of \$607,609.98) to support grassroots opportunities to respond to and prevent Gender-based Violence;
  - \$100,000 in 2023-24 and 2024-25 to NAWN to support an Indigenous Reconciliation Council Technical Lead;
  - \$50,000 in 2024-25 to support travel of Indigenous Reconciliation Council members; and,
  - \$45,000 in 2023-24 and \$75,000 in 2024-25 to First Light to address Gender-based Violence root causes in urban Indigenous context and implement priority MMIWG Calls for Justice.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality**

### **IVF Services**

October 31, 2024

#### **Summary**

The Department of Health and Community Services issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in May 2023 to hire an external consultant to complete a review of Newfoundland and Labrador Fertility Services (NLFS) to determine how to increase access to fertility services and provide a comprehensive and inclusive service to residents of the province. Thinkwell Research Inc. was the consultant hired to complete the fertility services review.

#### **Anticipated Questions**

- Does government support establishing an in-vitro fertilization clinic in the province?
- What is government doing to support those seeking access to in-vitro fertilization?

#### **Key Messages**

- Our government supports people who want to have children and has completed a fertility service review to determine how to increase access to fertility services and to find opportunities for expansion and improvements. We look forward to the recommendations on how we can improve services.
- In the meantime, to increase access to IVF services out of province, an IVF subsidy program was implemented in May 2022. There has been high utilization of the subsidy program with 182 applicants and a total of \$1.3 million approved, as of February 23, 2024.
- The program provides assistance to individuals to travel out of province for IVF treatments.
- The IVF Subsidy Program aligns with government's commitment to increase access to fertility treatments.

#### **Secondary Messages**

- There are two reproductive endocrinologists who have expressed concern with the delivery of fertility services in the province and have been consulted extensively as part of the fertility services review.
- We recognize that there is advocacy to provide IVF services in this province. The outcome of the fertility review will help determine the future of fertility services in this province.

#### **Background Information**

- Support is provided within the province for pre and post IVF treatments and intrauterine insemination treatments.

- Currently, people must leave the province to seek IVF. Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island do not have IVF clinics.
- A subsidy of \$5,000 per IVF cycle is available to all applicants who meet clinical eligibility, up to a maximum of three IVF cycles throughout their lifetime. To be eligible for a subsidy the individual must:
  - Hold a valid MCP card;
  - Be referred for IVF services by the Newfoundland and Labrador Fertility Services (NLFS) clinic to an IVF clinic, of the individual's choice, within Canada;
  - Be followed by NLFS for the duration of a pregnancy achieved through IVF; and,
  - Not have previously received a provincial subsidy for more than three cycles of IVF services
- The eligible expenses are limited to IVF procedures at a fertility clinic and prescribed medications associated with IVF procedures, verified as not covered by an individual's private insurance.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Menstrual Equity**  
October 31, 2024

**Summary**

Through an allocation of \$30,000 in Budget 2021, the Provincial Government provides funding to make period products available in all K-12 schools, free of charge to students who need them. The products are available in at least one bathroom in the schools, with posters around the schools indicating where students can find them if needed.

***Federal initiatives:***

As a commitment of Budget 2022, the Federal Government launched The Menstrual Equity Fund Pilot to address barriers regarding affordability, access, and stigma that individuals face relating to menstruation. As part of this initiative, Women and Gender Equality Canada announced \$17.9 million in September 2023 for Food Banks Canada to lead a national pilot to provide free access to menstrual products to diverse low-income communities across Canada (including nine locations in Newfoundland and Labrador) and to increase education and awareness about period products and stigma.

As of December 15, 2023, federally regulated employers are required to make menstrual products available to workers at no cost in the workplace, including putting pads and tampons in washrooms.

**Anticipated Questions**

- Will the Provincial Government expand access to free period products?
- What action is government taking to help people access period products?

**Key Messages**

- Access to period hygiene products is an **important social and healthcare need**.
- Our government has taken steps to address these issues for young people by providing **funding to make free period products available in all K-12 schools**.
- These efforts ensure that **no student faces the indignity** of not being able to access these essential products.
- We want to **help young people avoid skipping classes and other activities** because of a lack of access to period products.
- Ensuring access to period products in schools is an **important step toward gender equality and gender inclusivity**. Everyone who menstruates should have access to the products they need.
- Last fall, officials in my office held meetings with stakeholders to discuss how the recently announced national pilot involving the distribution of period products via food banks through Food Banks Canada can work in this province.

- We continue to work with stakeholders to advance increased access to period products throughout this province.

### **Secondary Messages**

- Lack of access to period products is known as **period poverty**, a growing problem within the menstrual equity landscape. Menstrual equity is defined as equal and comprehensive access to menstrual products, sexual and reproductive health education, hygiene facilities and waste management. Period poverty has a direct link to physical **health risks** such as reproductive and urinary tract infections as well as having a **negative impact on mental wellness**.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality provides **close to \$3.5 million in operational funding** to women's centres, violence prevention organizations, and other equity-seeking groups. **Some of these organizations offer free period products** to participants and members of the public who need them.
- Newfoundland and Labrador's nine primary pilot locations under the Food Banks Canada federally supported initiative are Botwood, Corner Brook, Gander, Hopedale, Labrador City, Marystown, Northwest River, Port Saunders, and St. John's.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**  
October 8, 2024

**Summary**

Researchers have reported that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than other women in Canada, and experience violence at higher rates than other populations. They are also sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women, and most of the women and children trafficked in Canada are Indigenous.

**Anticipated Question**

- What action is the Provincial Government taken to prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people?

**Key Messages**

- The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is dedicated to the prevention of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- Our government is committed to working with and uplifting the voices and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples through responding to the Calls for Justice as set out in the National Inquiry's final report, **'Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls'**.
- Our government is committed to working collaboratively with provincial Indigenous Governments and Organizations to respond to the priorities of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, and the Calls for Justice. The Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council provides another mechanism for a collaborative ongoing working relationship between Indigenous women and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in this regard.
- Since 2005, approximately \$4.2 million in project funding has been awarded to more than 180 culturally appropriate, Indigenous-led violence prevention projects throughout the province through the Indigenous Violence Prevention Program.
- The National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence bilateral agreement gave the Office of Women and Gender Equality an ability to provide an additional \$45,583 in 2024 to the \$271,000 allocated for the Indigenous Violence Prevention Grant Program, for a total of \$316,583.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality continues to work with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues to advance the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.

**Secondary Messages**

- The Reconciliation Council has been working to lead meaningful action regarding the 196 recommendations contained in the *Hear Our Voices* Report, as well as the national Calls for Justice.

- The Council's work focuses on relationship building between government and Indigenous women, to address the roots causes of inequity, and to prevent violence and harm against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- It is important to support targeted efforts that are led by Indigenous governments and organizations to prevent violence in communities throughout our province.

## **Background**

- The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has participated in two Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous roundtables regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.
- Throughout September and October 2023, the Honourable Dr. Andrew Furey, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, delivered apologies on behalf of government to residential school survivors in Rigolet, Postville, Makkovik, Hopedale, Nain, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Cartwright.
- Acknowledging the neglect, abuse and discrimination experienced by former students and their family members in residential schools is an ongoing commitment of the GNL to help advance reconciliation.
- In the spirit of continued learning, in November 2023, the government's Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation launched an eLearning module entitled '**Toward Reconciliation: An Overview of Indigenous Histories Across Canada**'. The course, which is mandatory for public service employees, provides an overview of Indigenous peoples in Canada and an introduction to Indigenous peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador. Developed in collaboration with Indigenous Governments and Organizations, this eLearning module is part one of an upcoming educational series highlighting Indigenous history, culture, and identity in the province.
- In November 2023, the GNL announced the creation of the Policing Transformation Working Group that will help shape the future of policing services in the province. This group is mandated to evaluate the current provincial policing model, conduct public engagement, and provide ongoing advice to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians receive the most effective and efficient policing services possible.
- Government will consider best practices in other jurisdictions and the community safety needs of all people and groups who reside in in the province, including urban, rural, Labrador, racialized and Indigenous communities.
- Work is also ongoing for the '**Inquiry into the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System**', which commenced in April 2022. The Inquiry will report on the treatment, experiences, and outcomes of Innu in the province's child protection system.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Operational Funding**  
October 8, 2024

**Summary**

Operational funding is always a concern for community-based groups and organizations. The Office of Women and Gender Equality annually receives many formal and informal requests for funding.

**Anticipated Questions**

- Will government provide funding to community-based groups and organizations who have requested it?
- What is government doing to support women and gender diverse people?

**Key Messages**

- Our government is appreciative of the many community-based groups working on the front lines, providing important services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality is providing over \$5.5 million in operational grants and subsidies to women's, anti-violence and 2SLGBTQQA+ organizations in 2024-2025.
- Funding requests are considered through the regular budget process, while also recognizing the fiscal reality of our province.
- We will continue to work with community-based organizations and groups to help them identify possible support from other funding sources, as well as investigating other ways for government to support ongoing work.

**Secondary Messages**

- The Provincial Government supports women, girls, and gender-diverse people through a variety of cross-departmental initiatives, including:
  - Support for the *Make Your Mark* campaign to promote diversity in municipal governance (Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs).
  - Annual funding of \$100,000 to the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (Department of Industry, Energy and Technology).
  - \$926,900 in funding for Women in Resource Development Inc. (Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills).
  - Newfoundland and Labrador Housing provides over \$9 million annually through the transition house system for short-term accommodations and supports for women and children fleeing intimate partner violence.

**Background**

The Office of Women and Gender Equality provides the following operational funding on an annual basis including funds designated in the 2024-2025 as follows:

<b>Office of Women and Gender Equality 2024-25 Grants</b>	
<b>Seven Women's Centres</b>	<b>\$</b>
Bay St. George Status of Women Council	152,775
Corner Brook Status of Women Council	216,270
Gander Status of Women Council	152,775
Gateway Status of Women Council	152,775
Labrador West Status of Women Council	152,775
Status of Women Central	152,775
Norpen Status of Women Council	152,775
<b>Total 1,132,920</b>	
<b>Ten Violence Prevention NL Organizations</b>	
Burin Peninsula Voice Against Violence	85,767
Violence Prevention South and Central	85,767
Violence Prevention – Avalon East	85,767
Communities Against Violence	85,767
Violence Prevention East	85,767
Violence Prevention Northern Peninsula	85,767
Violence Prevention Gander and Area	85,767
Violence Prevention Southwest	85,767
Violence Prevention Labrador	107,169
Corner Brook Status of Women Council – Violence Prevention	85,767
<b>Total 879,072</b>	
<b>Community Agencies</b>	
End Sexual Violence Newfoundland and Labrador	144,617
Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador	152,775
Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network	133,917
<b>Total 431,309</b>	
<b>Agencies/Boards/Commissions</b>	
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women	449,800
<b>Total 449,800</b>	
<b>Project Funding</b>	
Safe Harbour Outreach Project	152,775
Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth	64,473
Domestic Violence Help Line	4,000
<b>Total 221,248</b>	
<b>Indigenous Groups and Organizations</b>	
Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program	271,000
Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering	25,000
<b>Total 296,000</b>	
<b>Miscellaneous Grants</b>	
Miscellaneous Grants	83,900
<b>Total 83,900</b>	
<b>TOTAL GRANTS \$3,494,249</b>	

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Pay Equity and Pay Transparency**  
October 31, 2024

**Summary**

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador passed the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act** (the **Act**) in October 2022. This legislation builds on Government's ongoing efforts to support women and gender diverse people in Newfoundland and Labrador. The **Act** outlines pay equity requirements for the public sector and pay transparency requirements for the public and private sectors. Consultations to inform the regulations of the **Act** took place from March 11 to May 7, 2023, to inform the drafting of regulations.

**Anticipated Question**

- What action is government taking regarding pay equity and pay transparency?
- What is government doing to address the gender wage gap?
- Where are the regulations that were promised in December 2023?

**Key Messages**

- The passing of the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act** was historical for this province, and our Government is proud to be the first administration to do so.
- The legislation that we have brought forward is not only for pay equity – it includes pay transparency that will place Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader among the few jurisdictions in Canada, namely the Federal Government and British Columbia, that require employers to report on pay transparency.
- The pay equity and pay transparency legislation is an additional tool our Government is using to address the gender wage gap and advance equity among all people.
- It is this Government's responsibility to look out for the best interests of women, gender-diverse and marginalized people in our province.
- Our Government is taking concrete steps to promote equitable pay practices and we have made large strides to advance these efforts.
- **Since 2022**, we have:
  - Passed the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**;
  - Appointed a Pay Equity Officer;
  - Updated the job evaluation systems for core government to ensure they are pay equity compliant; and
  - Launched a consultation process to inform the regulations of the Act.  
Information gathered from these consultations is being used to help inform the drafting of the regulations. This work is ongoing.
  - A '**What We Heard**' has been prepared.

- The consultation process to inform the regulations of the Act was very important.
- The operationalization of this legislation will require patience and care; it can not be rushed - we must ensure long-term adherence to pay equity and pay transparency principles – we aim to have the impact of this legislation endure for generations.

## **Background**

### *Pay Equity*

- As of April 1, 2023, the **Act's** pay equity provisions apply to core government departments.
- In the future, at a date to be announced, the **Act's** pay equity provisions will apply to a wide range of “public bodies” as part of the public sector, including Crown corporations, boards, courts, municipalities, NL Health Services, post-secondary institutions (i.e., Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic), the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, and any additional body defined in the regulations as a public body.
- Under the **Act**, public bodies will be required to establish and maintain pay equity and prepare reports relating to pay equity and their actions taken, and submit them to the Pay Equity Officer, a new position established under the **Act** with responsibility for ensuring compliance. Public bodies who do not comply are subject to penalties.
- The pay equity provisions do not apply to public bodies that have fewer than 10 employees.
- The **Act** does not currently include pay equity provisions for private sector employers.

### *Pay Transparency*

- The **Act's** pay transparency provisions will apply to all employers in the province.
- In the future, at a date to be announced, the **Act's** pay transparency provisions will apply to all public and private sector employers of a certain size in Newfoundland and Labrador. According to April 2024 figures from Statistics Canada, it is estimated that there are currently more than 15,000 businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Under the **Act**, public and private employers will be required to include salary ranges on their job postings and will be prohibited from asking employees or applicants about salary histories or penalizing them for engaging in salary discussions.
- Public and private employers will be also required to complete, submit, and post a pay transparency report. Employers who do not comply would be subject to penalties.

## Initiatives for women

- The **creation of an additional 5,600 new regulated childcare spaces by 2026**, including the implementation of a new pre-kindergarten program.
- **Support for women to engage in the province's growing technology sector**, such as investment in Sandpiper Ventures and ongoing discussions with TechNL. Government has invested in women-led companies, specifically BreatheSuite, Swiftsure, SiftMed and SequenceBio.
- **Opportunities for women and gender-diverse people to consider running for government, including the Value We Bring project, Make Your Mark campaign, Future of the Vote, Equal Voice NL**, and partnerships with Municipalities NL.
- **Funding support for organizations that are helping to grow gender diversity in the trades, entrepreneurship, and industry**, such as the Office to Advance Women Apprentices, NLOWE, and Women in Resource Development.
- **We will continue to take a meaningful and comprehensive approach to address the gender wage gap.** This includes ongoing actions such as:
  - Mandating a Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens on all new policies and legislation (implemented 2021).
  - Using Women's Employment Plans (WEPs) and Gender Equity and Diversity Plans (GEDPs) to increase women's participation in non-traditional fields and skilled trades.
  - Increasing minimum wage. On April 1, 2024, the minimum wage increased by 50 cents, bringing it to \$15.60 per hour.
  - Implementing \$10/day daycare in January 2023.
  - IPGS has supported more than 2,300 women to get the training for the workforce, and more than 100 women to get the necessary supports to create jobs for themselves and others by starting their own businesses.
  - IPGS provides funding to single mothers for living allowances, child care and career training.
  - The Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation provides \$30,000 annually to each of the province's three Friendship Centres so they can provide culturally appropriate services so people can learn from each other.
  - Labrador Affairs provides funding for women and gender-diverse people for such things as the Labrador Aboriginal Nutritional and Artistic Assistance Program.

- Housing recently announced a partnership with the Federal Government for joint funding of \$17.12 million over five years for survivors of gender-based violence to secure housing in the private rental market.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity**  
October 31, 2024

**Summary**

On February 6, 2023, the Provincial Government hosted the third session of the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity, where approximately 60 people attended.

**Anticipated Questions**

- What is the purpose of the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity?
- How will the Roundtable help inform future government action?
- Will a Roundtable take place in 2024?

**Key Messages**

- It is a space to share knowledge and find new **ways to work together to advance gender equity** in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The **third session** of the Roundtable, which focused on gender equity through a **health and well-being lens**.
- Individuals attending included **leaders, advocates, and community members with lived experience** representing a **variety of community agencies, Indigenous Governments and Organizations, violence prevention and equity-seeking organizations**.
- Planning continues underway for the next roundtable - no date has been confirmed.
- Government remains committed to this initiative. Since the last Roundtable, there has been significant work by my Office to advance gender equity, including:
  - Consultations to inform regulations of the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**
  - \$40,000 to PerSISStence Theatre to support raising the first statue of a historical woman
  - \$890,000 to Quadrangle NL from the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence to increase its capacity, provincial outreach and service delivery
  - Consultations to inform new legislation that is inclusive of gender-diverse people
  - \$30,000 to Planned Parenthood NL to support its 2SLGBTQQIA+ Warm Line.

**Secondary Messages**

- **Themes and information** gathered from the 2023 Roundtable were shared throughout government to **help inform ongoing work and priorities**.
- The previous sessions of the Roundtable **informed the development of the Gender Responsive Standards of Practice for Mental Health and Addictions**. This standard is being implemented across NL Health Services and has been noted

as a best practice to use in further standards and policies.

- The Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity also **informed on the review of the Safe and Caring School Policy**.
- The 2023 Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity helped inform priority areas for **Wellbeing NL** around inclusion and equity lens, as well as the provincial implementation planning under the National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Red Dress Alert System**

October 31, 2024

### **Summary**

The establishment of a nation-wide alert system for missing Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people received unanimous support in the House of Commons in May 2023. The motion was presented by New Democratic MP Leah Gazan. Known as the 'Red Dress Alert System', it is comparable to the 'Amber Alert System' in place for missing children. A similar system called the 'Feather Alert Program' already exists in the State of California.

### **Anticipated Questions**

- What is the 'Red Dress Alert System'?
- What is government doing to support such the 'Red Dress Alert System'?

### **Key Messages**

- The 'Red Dress Alert System', comparable to the 'Amber Alert System' for missing children, may help ensure that when an Indigenous woman, girl or Two-Spirit person goes missing, there is a better chance of them being found.
- Federal Budget 2024 provided \$1.3 million over three years, starting in 2024–2025, to co-develop with Indigenous and other partners such as provinces and territories, a regional Red Dress Alert system. The first of these projects is being developed with Manitoba and is in the development stage.
- Collaboration with Indigenous as well as provincial and territorial partners is necessary for the successful implementation of a 'Red Dress Alert System' This issue was one of the topics discussed at the February 2024 Roundtable of Indigenous Leaders and Representatives and Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers focusing on the advancement of the Calls for Justice and ending violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We look forward to further discussion.
- Officials from the Office of Women and Gender Equality, Justice and Public Safety and Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation continue to collaborate on this, and many other issues related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals in our province.

### **Secondary Messages**

- On May 5 of each year, we commemorate Red Dress Day, a solemn occasion to raise awareness of the devastating epidemic of violence against Indigenous women and girls.
- Researchers have reported that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than other women in Canada.

- Indigenous women are sexually assaulted three times more often than non-Indigenous women, and most of the women and children trafficked in Canada are Indigenous.
- The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls highlighted the systemic causes of the crisis, including colonization, racism, and sexism. The report called for a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained response to the crisis and the implementation of the report's 231 recommendations.

**Office of Women and Gender Equality**  
**Repeal and Replacement of the Status of Women Advisory Council Act**  
October 8, 2024

**Summary**

Throughout 2023 and 2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality has been reviewing the **Status of Women Advisory Council Act** with the aim of supporting modernization and alignment with the expanded mandate of the Office, and a refreshed vision to include a dedicated focus on the needs and issues of concern for gender-diverse people.

In 2021, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador underwent a restructuring process that resulted in changes to the then-named Office for the Status of Women. These changes included the creation of an Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE) with a dedicated focus on the needs and issues of concern for gender-diverse individuals.

Within this expanded mandate, the Office of Women and Gender Equality remains responsible for the **Status of Women Advisory Council Act**, which governs the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, an arms-length, legislated organization that reports to the Minister on matters relating to the status of women in the province.

**Anticipated Question**

- Why is government looking to replace the **Status of Women Advisory Council Act**?

**Key Message**

- As the needs of residents in our province change, so must the services, programs and entities that serve them. We are committed to improving the well-being of women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in our province. Modernizing the Act is a needed and positive step forward.
- From fall 2023 through spring 2024, WGE worked with the Public Engagement Planning Division to hold online, and public, in-person consultations related to this new legislation.
- I look forward to debating this new legislation when it comes before the House.

**Background**

By replacing the existing Act, consideration will be given, but not limited, to:

- Updating the name of the Act and advisory council to reflect gender diversity.
- Allowing the advisory council's mandate to expand to include issues of concern for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.
- Re-defining/restructuring the responsibilities, duties and powers of all Council members and staff, including the President and Chief Executive Officer.

- Clarifying the composition of the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, including membership criteria and term limits.
- Strengthening mechanisms of accountability.
- Modernizing the language of the Act.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality Violence Prevention**

October 29, 2024

### **Summary**

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's violence prevention efforts are grounded in multi-departmental, government-community partnerships, focused on finding long-term solutions to the problem of gender-based violence.

### **Anticipated Questions**

- What is government doing to reduce gender-based violence in the province?
- Will government create a task force to respond to gender-based violence in the province?

### **Key Messages**

- Violence of any kind will not be tolerated in this province.
- Our government has committed to establishing a Ministerial-level Committee to End Gender-based Violence. This work is in the very early stages, and we look forward to continuing to work with our violence prevention community partners.
- In support of this, government has provided the Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women (PANSOW) funding to support regional focus groups and a provincial survey with survivors of Gender-based Violence towards policy and systems change.
- Our government has identified priorities for Newfoundland and Labrador, in collaboration with community partners, and is moving forward with the implementation of actions that are tailored to the needs of our province.
  - In 2023-2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality administered \$2.6 million in funding towards gender-based violence initiatives primarily led by community partners.
  - In 2024-2025, an additional \$3.6 million is being distributed to continue to build community capacity in the gender-based violence sector.
  - On September 24, 2024, the Community Violence Prevention Grants program was launched with up to \$525,000 being designated towards community-based violence prevention initiatives. An announcement on this year's successful projects is forthcoming.
  - A total of \$700,000 is being distributed to End Sexual Violence NL and the Transitional Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

(THANL) over three years through a fed-prov agreement supporting crisis hotlines.

- \$890,000 to Quadrangle NL to enhance violence prevention efforts, and education and awareness initiatives. Funding is also being used to increase capacity and provincial outreach and service delivery, in partnership with community stakeholders, such as women's centres, violence prevention organizations, Friendship Centres, and newcomer organizations.
- Over \$400,000 to community groups and organizations for violence prevention education, outreach, and awareness initiatives.
- Over \$316,000 to Indigenous groups throughout the province to carry out much needed violence prevention work.
- \$550,000 over four years to the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council from the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence to support its work.
- \$4,000 is being provided annually THANL to support the operations of the Provincial Domestic Violence Helpline.

## **Background**

In August 2023, the Federal Government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador signed a bilateral agreement for the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. The Province secured nearly \$13.6 million in new funding under that agreement to enhance and expand violence prevention programming and services over four years.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality hosted engagement sessions from March to May 2023, with over 70 community stakeholders, to gather input on future gender-based violence prevention efforts in the province.

This further builds on important work that has been already done by the Provincial Government and community organizations to prevent violence, including:

- **Establishment of the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council** to direct a range of policy changes aimed at implementing the calls for justice by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- **Revised Harassment Free Workplace Policy**, with improved awareness of workplace harassment; increased accountability for those in authority; established timelines for formal investigations; and a comprehensive complaint resolution process.

- Implemented **improvements to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations**, including provisions to address workplace harassment and worker-on-worker violence.
- **Updated Family Violence Protection Act** to broaden the definition of violence. Expanding this definition to include ‘psychological, emotional, and financial harm’, conveyed the importance of recognizing these forms of violence.
- The introduction of **bail supervision and electronic monitoring programs** to help lower levels of recidivism and improve safety for women.
- The **Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol Act** (Clare’s Law), providing authority for police to disclose information regarding interpersonal violence to a person at risk or to an applicant in accordance with an Interpersonal Violence Disclosure Protocol established by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council.
- The **Protection of Intimate Images Act**, which deals with providing civil remedies to victims, and deterring, preventing, and responding to the harms associated with revenge pornography and the non-consensual distribution of intimate images. Particularly, the new act would allow victims to sue a person in civil court for distributing intimate images without their consent.
- Implemented **changes to the Residential Tenancies Act** to allow for early termination of rental agreements in cases of domestic violence.
- Implemented **changes to the Labour Standards Act** allowing victims of family violence to take a total of 10 days of leave annually.

The National Action Plan is focused on a 10-year timeline and is based on five pillars and identifies existing challenges and opportunities for collaborative action:

1. Support for victims, survivors and their families;
  2. Prevention;
  3. Responsive justice system;
  4. Implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and
  5. Social infrastructure and enabling environment.
- The National Action Plan is separate from, but complementary to, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plans.

## **Office of Women and Gender Equality**

### **Women and Gender-Diverse Health Issues**

October 8, 2024

#### **Summary**

**1. Abortion** - The United States Supreme Court overturned abortion rights in America in June 2022. Local advocates have been calling for increased access to abortion services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**2. IVF** - Through a Facebook page 'Faces of Fertility', advocates have been highlighting challenges facing those with fertility issues in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**3. Gender-Affirming Care** - In November 2019, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador removed the legislative requirements for transition-related surgery (TRS) to be recommended by professionals at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto. A TRS policy was implemented and a TRS prior approval process, which recognized local surgical readiness assessors that are based in the province. To date there are five such assessors.

**4. Menstrual Equity** - Lack of access to menstrual products is known as 'period poverty'. This has a direct link to physical health risks such as reproductive and urinary tract infections, as well as having a negative impact on mental wellness. Leisha Toory, founder of the Period Project, has written the Minister of Health and Community Services (copying the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality) requesting that menstrual products be covered under MCP. She stated that menstrual health is a public health crisis. The Provincial Action Network on the Status of Women (PANSOW) say they are 'standing' with the Period Project in its request for such coverage and have publicly posted to social media (X).

#### **Anticipated Questions**

- How can individuals access abortion services in Newfoundland and Labrador?
- What abortion services are available to individuals in rural areas of the province?
- Do you support establishing an in-vitro fertilization clinic in the province?
- What is government doing to support those seeking access to in-vitro fertilization?
- What is the government doing to support transgender healthcare needs?
- Are there any plans to expand access to free menstrual products?
- Will government cover the cost of menstrual products under MCP?
- What is government doing to address menopause?

## Key Messages

### Abortion

- Abortion rights, fertility and reproductive health are fundamental rights for women and gender diverse people in Canada.
- We commend organizations that support women and gender diverse individuals to access the healthcare services they need.
- Eliminating abortion services will not stop abortions; it will just stop safe abortion services.

### Gender-Affirming Care

- Ensuring equitable access to appropriate healthcare services is an important step toward gender equality and gender inclusivity.
- Our government is committed to ensuring equity, security, and social inclusion for transgender and gender-diverse people.
- We have met with advocates from the transgender community to learn about their experiences with the healthcare system
- Our government will continue to collaborate with Health and Community Services to ensure transgender people can access responsive, equitable services that meet their healthcare needs.
- MCP covers the costs of insured physician services as per the **Medical Care and Hospital Insurance Act**.

### IVF

- Our government supports people who want to have children.
- In March 2022, an in-vitro fertilization (IVF) Subsidy Program was created for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians requiring these treatments.
- The program provides assistance to individuals to travel out of province for IVF treatments.
- The IVF Subsidy Program aligns with government's commitment to increase access to fertility treatments.
- Government has committed to an evaluation of the IVF program to ensure it is meeting its intended objectives, and to help inform any future initiatives.

## **Menstrual Equity**

- Access to menstrual products is an important social and healthcare need, and our government has taken steps to address these issues for young people by providing funding to make free products available in schools. Ensuring access these products in schools is an important step toward gender equality and gender inclusivity.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality provides close to \$2.5 million in operational funding to women's centres, violence prevention organizations, and other equity-seeking groups. Some of these organizations offer free menstrual products to members of the publicNLwho need them.
- Our government continues to work to address the healthcare needs of people of all genders. By conducting research into areas such as menstrual equity and menopause, and developing partnerships with stakeholders, we aim to find innovative solutions to support the healthcare needs of all individuals.
- We are continuing to work with community stakeholders to identify ways to support the needs to women and gender-diverse people and increase equity for people of all gender identities.

## **Background Information**

### **Abortion**

- In Newfoundland and Labrador, abortion services are covered by MCP.
- The Athena Clinic, located in St. John's, performs 95 per cent of abortions done in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Athena Clinic also operates satellite abortion clinics in different parts of the province once a month.
- The *Access to Abortion Services Act* (2016) legislated safe access zones of up to a maximum of 50 meters around health care facilities, 160 meters around a doctor's residence and 10 meters around a doctor's office. The act aims to balance the rights of individuals to access legal health services with the rights of others to protest or express dissent.

### **IVF**

- Support is provided within the province for pre and post IVF treatments and intrauterine insemination treatments.
- Currently, people must leave the province to seek IVF. Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island do not have IVF clinics.

- A subsidy of \$5,000 per IVF cycle is available to all applicants who meet clinical eligibility, up to a maximum of three IVF cycles throughout their lifetime. To be eligible for a subsidy the individual must:
  - Hold a valid MCP card;
  - Be referred for IVF services by the Newfoundland and Labrador Fertility Services (NLFS) clinic to an IVF clinic, of the individual's choice, within Canada;
  - Be followed by NLFS for the duration of a pregnancy achieved through IVF; and,
  - Not have previously received a provincial subsidy for more than three cycles of IVF services
  
- The eligible expenses are limited to IVF procedures at a fertility clinic and prescribed medications associated with IVF procedures, verified as not covered by an individual's private insurance.

### **Gender-Affirming Care:**

- The insured TRS services below are funded by the province's provincial health insurance plans when a TRS Request for Prior Approval document is completed and approved before the procedure takes place:
  - Breast/chest surgery: mastectomy with chest masculinization, breast augmentation when clinical eligibility criteria are met
  - Genital surgery: hysterectomy, orchiectomy, salpingo-oophorectomy
  - Genital reconstruction: vaginoplasty, metoidioplasty, phalloplasty
  
- When certain TRS procedures may be unavailable in the province, insured TRS services can be funded by the province's provincial health insurance plans when prior approval is obtained, and the services are provided in a publicly funded facility within Canada. If insured TRS procedures are unavailable in the Canadian publicly funded system, prior approval may be sought for approval for the procedure in a Canadian private facility.
  - Like other specialized insured services that are not available within Newfoundland and Labrador, travel may be required to access TRS services. Because beneficiaries may incur substantial out-of-pocket travel costs, they may be eligible for financial assistance with medical travel and accommodation expenses under existing medical transportation assistance programs.
  
- The following TRS procedures and related expenses are among those not covered by MCP
  - TRS services received without prior approval from MCP.
  - Facial feminization, liposuction, tracheal shave, and hair transplantation are a few examples of TRS services which are currently not covered by MCP.
  - Cosmetic surgical revisions.
  
- Eligibility for prior approval for TRS is based on World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care.

### **Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP)**

- Hormone therapy would be considered a drug therapy and may be covered through the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program (NLPDP).
- NLPDP provides financial assistance for the purchase of eligible prescription medications for those who are an eligible [MCP beneficiary](#).
- Various hormone therapies are covered by NLPDP through open benefits, and would be accessible to eligible patients, regardless of whether the individual is transgender or transitioning. If the prescribed therapy is on the special authorization listing, a physician would apply for the product through the standard special authorization review process.

### **Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP)**

- If TRS prior approval is granted and the MCP beneficiary must travel to access this service, the beneficiary may be eligible for financial assistance for associated travel costs.
- The Medical Transportation Assistance Program (MTAP) provides financial assistance for airfare, accommodation, meals and local transportation. Please visit <https://www.gov.nl.ca/hcs/mcp/travelassistance/>.