

**EVALUATION REPORT  
ON THE POLICY RESEARCH FUND,  
STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA**

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## Executive Summary

### A Brief Introduction

The evaluation of a research fund, especially one that strives to influence public policy thinking and development, is a complicated exercise that involves a wide array of stakeholder perceptions of process and outcomes, as well as the objective analysis of documentation and evidence to support various claims. The evaluation becomes even more complicated when the research fund serves a very diverse community of interests, both among researchers and report users. It is further complicated when the research fund has as its objective the creation of independent policy research while being located within a federal government line department and the research may well be critical of current policy. This is the situation with SWC's Policy Research Fund. To the best of my knowledge the Fund is quite unique in this regard, even across international boundaries. These considerations offer both unique challenges and opportunities to the stakeholders involved with the Fund.

Overall, the staff at SWC has done a remarkable job of balancing the diverse interests of the communities that it serves, while maintaining the integrity, focus, independence and diversity that characterize the PRF. There is considerable evidence that the Fund has the kind of influence on policy thinking and development that can be expected from any research fund that hopes to affect policy choices and that the research reports are useful and useable by the vast majority of readers in their educational, research and advocacy activities. The concerns that arise are relatively minor, with one exception. There is a concern that can be generalized across the stakeholder groups about the length of time required to release research findings. The report explores the sources of this concern and offers suggestions to ameliorate it.

### Context

The Policy Research Fund (PRF) is the product of a broad consultative process undertaken by Status of Women Canada (SWC) in 1996. The fund issued its first call for proposals in April, 1997 and published its first research reports in 1998. Since the first call was issued, over forty projects have been funded. The overall objective of the PRF is to fund independent policy research that seeks to advance gender equality. More specifically, the Fund seeks to:

- Fund longer-term, forward-thinking policy research on emerging issues affecting women, as well as research on shorter-term urgent issues in response to unanticipated events on the policy agenda;

- Identify trends and build knowledge on the gender implications of societal change, and;
- Enhance the public debate from a gender perspective.

At the inception of the PRF, Status of Women Canada made a commitment to evaluate the structure and impact of the Fund after five years of activities. An independent, objective and qualified evaluator with particular experience in the field of policy research, Mr. Arthur E. Stewart, was selected through a competitive process to undertake the five-year evaluation of the Fund.

An important source of information on the perceptions of external stakeholders was a series of telephone interviews and mail surveys. These generated information from applicants to the Fund, national women's organizations, federal government officials, provincial government officials and policy research institutes. Questions focused on the principles that govern the Fund, the experiences of researchers who applied to the Fund, the use and impact of the research reports, and the future of the PRF. This information was complemented by interviews with SWC staff and members of the External Committee of the PRF, as well as a review of documents relevant to the Fund's operations and impact.

### **Stakeholder Views**

Overall, the Fund was rated very positively by the external stakeholders. In terms of adherence to its guiding principles, the PRF was ranked highly in terms of its independence, rigour and focus on gender equality. It also did quite well in terms of diversity, accessibility and relevance, although there were concerns that the Fund could do better in each of these areas. The sole area where the Fund was rated poorly was the transparency of its operations. In general terms, the PRF is seen as an important source of funding for research on gender equality issues.

For the most part, researchers were satisfied with their research experiences with the PRF. There were a variety of concerns about the nature of the contractual agreement and the rules governing the release of findings. The major concern expressed by researchers was the length of time required to publish the findings, which also limited the ability of researchers to discuss them publicly. Researchers believe that this is an important reason that policy relevance of the publications is not as great as it might be.

Individuals who receive the PRF publications read those of direct interest and scan the remainder. Most organizations retain the publications in an organizational library or resource centre and make them available to members of the organization and, on occasion, to the public. For the most part, the physical quality of the publications is described as distinctive and/or attractive.

The publications are used for educational activities in formal and informal learning settings and for advocacy activities. Almost all respondents reported that the publications have increased their awareness of women's issues by providing a deeper and richer understanding of the experiences and issues facing specific groups of

*"I want to acknowledge the value of all research conducted under the Policy Research fund on a broad range of topics, not just this most recent report. The work conducted under the Fund has been, and continues to be, of enormous value to women in a variety of political and non-political positions all across Canada." – Sandra Kelly, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Newfoundland and Labrador*

women. Very few of the stakeholders reported an influence on their own research activities or agendas, although several observed that the PRF publications helped them to formulate new research questions or confirm the relevance and importance of existing questions.

Policy thinking and policy development present a problem in terms of capturing the influence of the PRF research reports. It is obviously very difficult to track the direct influence of a given publication to a specific change in public policy, although there are many clear instances where the PRF publications have been aired in public debates and deliberations of governments. Most respondents to the evaluation felt that the publications did have some indirect influence on policy thinking and policy development. The influence was largely contextual through the provision of background evidence and argument, rather than through direct policy recommendations. In this sense, the publications have less influence on policy thinking and development than they might. Again, this is not a criticism of the PRF in particular; it is inherent in the nature of all research funds. There is also a concern that the length of time required to release the findings may mean that the research often comes too late in the policy process to have much influence. Of particular interest in this regard are the views of government officials. While most would agree that the PRF publications have some indirect influence in the sense described above, some also expressed concerns that the policy relevance of the papers is not as great as it might be. Some federal officials also argued that the authors of the reports often do not understand what constitutes a useful and useable policy recommendation from the point of view of a government policy maker.

### **Analysis and Recommendations**

There are several considerations that must be aired before proceeding to my analysis of the information and recommendations to SWC. First, we must recognize that the PRF serves a very diverse community, including academics, community-based researchers, women's organizations, and the federal government. Each of these groups is possessed of its own research methodologies, its own beliefs about research priorities, and its own views about policy relevance. This inevitably complicates the management of the PRF research agenda, and the projects that should be funded and published, etc., and

requires that the staff of the PRF walk a fine line in balancing the needs of these diverse groups. I believe that they have done a remarkable job in achieving a balance and it is important to remember this when thinking about the evaluation report. Second, and relatedly, is the fact that the PRF attempts to provide funding for independent research that is frequently critical of governments from its position within a federal government department. At the same time, those within government believe that the Fund is meant to provide gender-based analysis that is useful and useable within government and be in keeping with government priorities. Again, the Fund is pulled in two directions. Some see this factor as pitting the Fund's independence and value to researchers against its policy relevance and utility to government. This too must be part of the context for understanding the functioning of the PRF and the recommendations of this report.

One further issue must be dealt with before outlining the recommendations of the report. In some instances there is clearly a gap between the perceptions of the external stakeholders and the views of SWC staff, as expressed in their interviews, and the documented descriptions of procedures followed by the staff with respect to applications, proposal review, information provided, etc. These are a very small proportion of the overall activities of the PRF. In these cases, I have no way of determining what actually happened in each case and will not assume that one side or the other was right. I will merely observe that SWC should undertake to follow all of its stated procedures in a manner that brings dignity and fairness to all parties. There is little more that SWC can do.

Based on the interviews conducted and the surveys received, I have adopted the position that the most important consideration for the Fund is to increase its policy relevance. The reasons are straightforward. The need to enhance policy relevance and influence is the biggest concern expressed by the external stakeholders and policy relevance is essential to the continued health and viability of the PRF. It is also the case that policy relevant research that affects policy makers' choices offers both researchers and women's organizations the greatest opportunity to effect real change in the status of Canadian women. The major recommendations of this report focus on increasing the policy relevance of the PRF research, while maintaining the independence and rigour valued by researchers. In essence, these recommendations suggest ways to speed up the release of research findings and provide materials that help to bridge the gap between federal government perceptions of policy relevance and author perceptions of policy relevance. The second focus of my recommendations is a reallocation of the existing PRF budget so as to enable PRF staff to fund innovative outreach programs to encourage more applications from under-represented groups and to fund new forms of dissemination of research findings. Currently, it seems that the publications process is overly expensive and producing a great deal of documentation that goes unread. I have suggested ways to reduce those expenses while maintaining full bilingual publication and, I believe, expanding the effective reach of the publications.

## The Policy Research Fund

The Policy Research Fund (PRF) is the product of a broad consultative process undertaken by Status of Women Canada (SWC) in 1996. The overall objective of the PRF is to fund independent policy research that seeks to advance gender equality. More specifically, the Fund seeks to:

- Fund longer-term, forward-thinking policy research on emerging issues affecting women, as well as research on shorter-term urgent issues in response to unanticipated events on the policy agenda;
- Identify trends and build knowledge on the gender implications of societal change, and;
- Enhance the public debate from a gender perspective.

The goals of the Fund are to bridge the gap between research and policy, to bring policy research on gender equality into the public policy arena, to make policy research accessible to policy-makers, researchers, women's organizations and other equality-seeking advocates, and to provide rigorous, credible research on gender equality that policy-makers will take into account.

When the PRF was established, Status of Women Canada undertook to develop a framework for the ongoing evaluation of the Fund, which will guide its periodic assessment and the continuous improvement of the policies and implementation of the program.

The PRF was put in place following the *Report on Consultations Held March – May 1996 and Follow-Up Action Plan*, (November, 1996). Many aspects of the program were developed simultaneously during the early years of the Fund. Interim projects, developing those themes that were identified during the consultations, were carried out and nominations to the External Committee were sought from women's groups across the country. The first call for proposals was issued in 1996 and the first research reports were published in 1998. There have been calls for proposals on fourteen research themes, including three urgent calls. Over forty PRF projects have been funded and monitored from the point of their selection by the External Committee through to publication and national dissemination. The list of themes and publications appears in Annex A.

In 1999, SWC contracted with the firm of Jamieson, Beales and Lalonde for the development of an evaluation framework for the PRF. Their report served to alert the staff of SWC and the External Committee to the large number of evaluation issues to be

addressed. It also prompted the collection of more evaluation data and provided a basis for evaluation planning.

The evaluation plan for the PRF was developed to focus on departmental priorities and mandate (relevance), effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the PRF (success), and the appropriateness of the means used (cost-effectiveness), the three priorities identified in *Evaluation Standards for the Government of Canada*. The Research Directorate of SWC based its evaluation planning on the experiences of Canadian Heritage, the International Development Research Centre, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, as well as other non-governmental stakeholders and consumers of the research.

An independent, objective and qualified evaluator with particular experience in the field of policy research, Mr. Arthur E. Stewart, was selected through a competitive process.

## **Background to the Evaluation**

In response to the call for proposals to evaluate the PRF, the evaluator submitted a brief document outlining his qualifications, previous experience and the broad outlines of an evaluation plan. The document also pointed to the difficulties and limitations inherent in the evaluation of research publications and of the methods for measuring their impact and influence. The evaluator was invited to prepare a more detailed evaluation plan, which was reviewed by an ad hoc committee with expertise in women's issues and evaluation methodologies and by the staff of the Research Directorate at SWC. Feedback from the ad hoc committee and SWC staff was then incorporated into the final evaluation plan.

The evaluation methodology will be described more fully below, but it is important to outline the general approach to the evaluation and to highlight the thinking that informed the evaluation plan. In brief, the evaluation plan focused on the perceptions of stakeholders from the various communities served by or with an interest in the PRF and its products: the research community, women's organizations, the federal government, the provincial governments, and other policy research organizations. The three priorities (relevance, success and cost-effectiveness) listed in the federal government's evaluation guidelines provided the focus for the development of survey instruments and telephone interview protocols designed to elicit stakeholder views on key questions and issues. Because of the inherent limitations of quantitative methods in the evaluation of research and the measurement of its impact and influence, the approach taken in this evaluation report is primarily qualitative. Basic descriptive statistics are provided where appropriate, but the emphasis is squarely on the range of



experiences and perceptions of the users of the research products and of those who produce them under the auspices of the Fund. When the perceptions of the stakeholders are combined with an analysis of the actual structure and processes that govern the Fund, it is possible to generate the kinds of information that can be used for organizational learning and to help shape the future of the Fund so that it is better able to serve its constituency and meet its objectives.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation of the PRF combines information from a variety of sources:

- English and French survey instruments mailed out to a large sample of applicants to the PRF
- English and French survey instruments mailed out to a large sample of potential users of the products of the PRF
- Telephone interviews with a sample of funded researchers and potential users of the research products
- Interviews with staff in the Research Directorate and in other directorates of Status of Women Canada
- Telephone interviews with current and former members of the External Committee
- Analysis of documents provided by SWC.

### **External Stakeholder Views of the PRF**

The views of external stakeholders were elicited in two ways: first, in-depth telephone interviews conducted with a sample of key informants and, second, mail surveys provided to key informants who are not interviewed by telephone and to secondary stakeholders. The purpose was to gather information from the primary producers and users of PRF research about their experiences with the research process and with the resulting products. This was the key information source about the dissemination of research and the achievement of the Fund's objectives

The first step in this process was to select a group of key informants to be interviewed by telephone. It was agreed that thirty-five such interviews be conducted, divided as follows: ten researchers who have been awarded contracts under the PRF, chosen to reflect the various calls for proposal; ten senior representatives of women's groups across the country, chosen to reflect region and diversity; ten senior federal government officials, chosen to reflect those departments most likely to have used SWC research reports; five representatives of the broader public policy community, including those at academic policy centres. The lists were developed by the evaluator, with input and advice from the staff at SWC.

The second step was to develop the list of stakeholders who would receive a survey instrument by mail. It was agreed that SWC mailing lists would be used to develop the list of recipients. In the final analysis, the English survey instruments were mailed to two hundred and twenty former applicants to the Fund, sixty national women's organizations, forty federal government officials and twenty provincial government officials. Twenty-five survey instruments were returned because the mailing lists were out of date. Most of these were in the category of applicants to the Fund. In addition, thirty French surveys were distributed to national women's organizations, PRF applicants and provincial government officials.

The third step was the development of the protocol that guided the telephone interviews. In accordance with the terms of the request for proposal, the interviews focused on:

- The reach and impact of the research produced by the Fund, including its dissemination, its influence on attitudes and thinking about gender-based policy development and analysis, and its impact in terms of direct policy influence;
- How well the PRF has met its objectives and adhered to its guiding principles, and;
- The future direction of the Fund in terms of what should be changed and what should remain the same.

The principles that were developed to guide the PRF formed the basis of the interview section related to Fund objectives and principles. The section related to the achievement of objectives explored the various routes of influence from increased awareness through direct policy action. The section on research experience elicited the views of researchers with respect to the application process, the contractual nature of the research agreement, rules governing intellectual property and the adequacy of funding. The strengths and weaknesses of the fund were the subject of questions relating to what should remain the same and what should be changed. The telephone interview protocol was used as a guide to the interviews. The interviews were seen as an evolving conversation that allowed the key stakeholders the opportunity to explore their thoughts about the Fund and that allowed the interviewer to probe interesting comments more fully. The evaluator has used this approach very successfully in the past to reveal routes of influences that might not otherwise be apparent in more formally structured interviews.

The approach to potential respondents was made by telephone. The purpose of the interview was explained and a mutually convenient time for the interview was arranged. Those who agreed to be interviewed were faxed a briefing note, if they wished, that highlighted the basics of the PRF and provided a broad description of the issues to be explored during the interview. The interviews were 25-35 minutes in length. The interviewer recorded notes of the conversation on an interview form.

Confidentiality of responses was guaranteed to those who agreed to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled between December 1, 2001 and January 15, 2002.

The mail survey instruments were a shorter and more structured version of the telephone protocol. Two survey instruments, guided by a common core of issues, were developed in recognition of the differences among the target audiences. One instrument was sent to a large sample of applicants to the PRF and focused more intensively on their experiences with the Fund, but also sought their input on the reach and influence of the work produced by the Fund. A second instrument was directed to national women's groups, and to federal and provincial government officials. This instrument focused more explicitly on dissemination and the achievement of objectives of the research products from various user perspectives.

The package mailed to respondents included a covering letter from the evaluator, an addressed, stamped return envelope for the questionnaire, and the questionnaire itself. The purpose and nature of the survey were explained in the covering letters and assurances of confidentiality were provided.

Marguerite Courchene agreed to serve as the translator of survey instruments, the telephone interview protocol, and other short documents related to the interview and survey processes. She also conducted seven telephone interviews in French and provided English transcripts of those interviews

### **Internal Stakeholder Views of the PRF**

In addition to external views, the management and operations of the PRF were explored in interviews with members of various directorates at SWC, including those responsible for translation services and communications, as well as those in the Research Directorate. These interviews focused on questions of the structure of Fund governance, the application and awards procedures, financing of the Fund, translation and publication processes, and relationships among the staff, External Committee and researchers. In addition, five current members of the External Committee and two former members of the committee were interviewed to explore the role of the External Committee in the operations of the Fund. All of the internal stakeholder interviews were conducted in late February and early March of 2002. The late timing of these interviews reflected the evaluator's desire to become familiar with the views of the external stakeholders and the issues that had arisen from the those interviews prior to the interviews with SWC staff and external Committee members.

### **Other Information Sources**

The evaluator was provided with a great variety of data and descriptive documents with regard to the funding, applications, procedures, structures and governance of the Policy Research Fund. These files provided quantitative information on the calls for proposal, applications received, awards granted, researcher feedback, reader comments,

number of publications, distribution of publications, website usage, basic financial data, breakdown of spending by project, by proposal, and on research versus administration, and the timeliness of decision-making.

There were some inconsistencies in the data provided by SWC to the evaluator. As a result, it was not always possible to obtain complete and consistent series on applications by researcher category. This does not reflect any hidden motives on the part of SWC. Rather, it reflects the process of a nascent organization learning what kinds of data are needed for administration and management of the program and for the purposes of evaluation.

### **Survey and Interview Data: External Respondents**

Twenty-nine telephone interviews were conducted. The breakdown of the interviews was: nine with successful applicant to the PRF, seven with national women's organizations, eight with federal government officials, and five with representatives of public policy organizations. This is fewer interviews than the thirty-five called for in the evaluation plan. The timing of the interviews over the December holiday season and the time constraints imposed on the evaluation process resulted in this lower number of telephone interviews conducted.

Three hundred and seventy survey instruments were mailed out as described above. Twenty-five were returned as undeliverable, leaving a total of three hundred and forty-five. The overall response rate to the mail-out was fifteen percent, with fifty-four responses from the various user groups. A further breakdown of the survey responses reveals: nineteen from applicants to the Fund, twelve from national women's organizations, nine from federal government officials, ten from provincial government officials, and four unclassified because the respondents did not check the appropriate box to indicate the user group.

The response rates to the survey varied considerably by user group (the rates that follow exclude from the totals the surveys returned as undeliverable): eight percent among applicants to the PRF; eighteen percent among national women's organizations; twenty-three percent among federal government officials; forty-three percent among provincial government officials.

In total, the findings discussed below are based on eighty-three observations, with the breakdown as follows: twenty-eight applicants to the PRF, (of which thirteen were funded); nineteen representatives of national women's organizations; seventeen federal government officials; ten provincial government officials; five representatives of public policy organizations and four unclassified responses.

## **External Stakeholder Views**

The following sections report the perceptions of the various external stakeholder groups and the reported procedures and policies of the PRF. It will become very clear that there are major gaps between the perceptions of some stakeholders about the purpose, nature and operations of the Fund and the processes and rules as explained by SWC staff and as described in the program documentation.

A number of national policy research and advocacy organizations were contacted to determine their usage of the PRF publications. Their responses are reported briefly in this section and are not included in the sections that follow. For the most part, these organizations were aware of the existence of the publications, but did not use them enough to warrant comment on their merits or influence. Several organizations did report that they scan the SWC website occasionally and have infrequently scanned or read a publication as background to an issue of interest to the organization. Several of the people interviewed also reported that they do not personally use the publications, but that it is possible that others within the organization do use them as background for their work. One organization noted that all PRF publications are received and scanned briefly. This organization argued that the focus on gender equality issues and how they intersect with broader policy topics makes the work of the Fund a bit too narrowly focussed to be useful for the organization's broader, topic-based interests. The perception of SWC was that it is not a major player on the broader public policy research and analysis scene and seems to be an advocate for women's issues within the government.

## **PRF Objectives and Guiding Principles**

Respondents to the survey and those interviewed were asked to judge the PRF in terms of how well it adhered to its objectives. In general, they rated the Fund quite highly in terms of overall achievement of objectives. The work produced by the Fund was most frequently described as credible, rigorous and independent. Several respondents did express concern that the quality of the publications varied and that some publications might not be accessible to all interested groups. One theme that later emerged from the interviews and surveys, especially those with applicants was first evident in several of the responses to this question: namely, that the program tends to lack coherence over time and comprehensiveness in terms of an in-depth exploration of themes. This occurs because the calls for proposal tend to be one-time events with respect to any given specific topic.

The guiding principles of the Fund are defined as follows:

- **Independence:** The independence of the Fund will be achieved in several ways. Research priorities will be based on periodic consultations. An External Committee will finalize research priorities, select research to be funded, and determine whether or not to publish the outcomes. Authors will have control over research methodologies, findings and conclusions and will have the right to publish their work.
- **Diversity:** The fund will be sensitive to the realities of all women in Canada and the overall work produced will reflect the diversity of women (e.g., in terms of age, race, class, national and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, region, language and religion).
- **Accessibility and Availability:** Research funding will be accessible and available to a wide range of constituents and research results will be disseminated to a wide range of audiences. All published material will be available in both official languages and in alternate formats upon request.
- **Affordability:** The Fund will be implemented with minimal overhead, so as to maximize the funds going directly to research and production.
- **Eligibility:** A wide range of researchers will be eligible for funding, including individual researchers, independent researchers, university-based researchers, women's organizations, research organizations and partnerships involving several groups or individuals. Partnerships will be welcomed, but not required.
- **Rigor of the Research:** Policy research selected will be held to the highest methodological, ethical and professional standards.
- **Relevance:** The research will make a unique contribution to the policy debate through concrete policy recommendations and/or new approaches to emerging policy questions.
- **Accountability:** As a federal agency, SWC is accountable to the Secretary of State (Status of Women) for ensuring that funds are spent for the purposes for which they were intended. The research produced will enhance the work of women's organizations, the research community policy decision-makers and other partners.
- **Transparency:** The operations of the fund will be transparent. Criteria and decisions, including selection criteria for research projects and funding decisions, will be made public.
- **Focused on Gender Equality:** All research projects will focus on advancing gender equality and recognize the diversity among women.

Those interviewed and respondents to the survey were asked about most, but not all of these guiding principles. Clearly, some groups or individuals would not have any relevant experiences to draw upon in judging adherence to some of the guiding principles.

**Summary:** In general, the Fund was rated very highly in terms of its independence, the diversity of women represented in the research, and the focus on gender equality. Assessments of the Fund in terms of the rigor of the research, accessibility and policy relevance were also generally good, but there was a significant minority who expressed various degrees of concern about adherence to each of these principles. The fund scored relatively poorly in terms of the transparency of its operations. These observations will be explored more fully below. The remaining principles were not assessed in the interviews or surveys.

**Independence:** Women's organizations, both levels of government and successful applicants to the PRF provided a very positive assessment of the independence of the Fund. Some researchers and government officials expressed reservations about the ability to be independent given that the Fund operates as part of a federal government line department. Several others noted that the Fund frequently challenged existing policy directions. Several researchers also observed that the SWC review of the research and its "vetting" by affected government departments may limit independence somewhat. In fact, manuscripts are sent to affected government departments for review only in the sense that these departments review the factual accuracy of policy references in the manuscripts. Other departments do not have authority to approve or disapprove of the research projects. The view of SWC staff is that most researchers find the process useful and that having the findings reviewed by relevant government departments has resulted in suggested clarifications of research findings, but has never resulted in a refusal to publish.

The responses of applicants to the PRF obtained through the survey instrument were somewhat at odds with these general views. It should be noted that this group represented twenty-six applications to the Fund, but only four awards. The assessments of this group of applicants were generally negative relative to the assessments of other groups.

**Diversity:** In terms of the diversity of women, ratings were uniformly high for most groups, with a few low scores scattered across the groups. Concerns about the lack of diversity in the research were not strongly felt. Most people felt that the effort to reflect diversity was there, but that more could be done with regard to specific groups. The list of underrepresented groups directly reflected the interests and/or activities of the respondents. Aboriginal women, minority women generally, and lesbians were all cited as groups that should be the focus of more work. In terms of approaches, several people observed that the focus is too academic and that more community-based research needs to be done. In contrast, several respondents noted that there was a particularly strong effort to conduct research on aboriginal women and on issues of sexual orientation. Another observed that the research reflects diversity almost to the point of ridiculousness. Clearly, there are diverse views about how well the Fund

reflects the diversity of Canadian women. Overall, the PRF was judged quite favourably in this dimension.

A review of the 40 research publications released through December, 2001 indicates that a significant number of the reports explicitly focus on some dimension of the diversity of Canadian women. In addition, the selection of research themes has included two themes devoted to integrating diversity into policy research and analysis and several themes devoted to the circumstances of particular groups of women.

**Accessibility:** Perceptions of the accessibility of the reports varied widely. Overall, approximately one-half of the respondents felt that the research reports were good to excellent and the reports were described as highly readable and focused on important issues. The remainder expressed a variety of concerns. Some of the women's organizations and government officials found the prose dense and jargon-laden, with an orientation that was too academic. For government policy purposes, this meant that the research was not directly useful in their work; considerable effort had to be devoted to distilling relevant messages. For women's organizations, it meant that some people would be excluded, particularly those in marginalized groups, some immigrant women, and those with lower literacy levels. It was suggested by many observers that SWC should consider the release of a shorter, more popular version of the reports. Several people also noted the inherent tension between accessibility and rigor of the research. Perhaps, the suggestion noted above is one way to achieve both ends.

The publications are available in English and French in print and on the SWC web site. Distribution of the print version is quite extensive and covers the great majority of organizations, groups and individuals with an interest in policy-focused research on women's issues. Several people did express a significant concern. Despite the statement that the publications are made available in alternative formats upon request, several respondents reported that they had made such requests several times and did not receive alternative format versions of the requested publications. Follow-up contact also produced no results and left these individuals with the strong feeling that they simply do not matter to SWC. Staff at SWC reported that two requests for alternative formats had been received and that the alternative formats were supplied as requested. There is clearly a discrepancy between these two views.

**Rigor:** Research is widely regarded as meeting the standard of rigor, although many observers noted that it varied considerably depending on the specific research project. Most subject to criticism in this regard is some of the community-based research that has been funded. There was a concern that small sample sizes and testimonials do not produce research results that can be generalized and that meet standards of rigor. On the other side of the coin, are those who argue that the standards of the PRF are largely those of the academic community and not easily transferable to judgements about community-based research. They argue that the PRF should fund all research that is



thorough and credible so that community-based research is on an equal footing with academic research.

Data provided by SWC reveals that across the 14 themes analyzed, there were over 450 applications, with funding awarded to 67 proposals. There is clearly substantial variation in the number of applications received by theme and in the success rate across the themes. A subset of 7 themes provided a more detailed breakdown of applicants and awards. This subset included 156 applications and 28 awards. In terms of awards and applications, 35 applications were received from individual researchers and 6 awards provided, 57 applications from NGOs with 5 awards, 50 applications from academics with 14 awards, and 14 joint applications with 3 awards. The success rates across these researcher categories do vary considerably around the average of 17.9%, with NGOs lowest at 8.8% and academics highest at 28.0%. Does this lend credence to the concern that the process is biased in favour of one group or another? Perhaps, it suggests that academics on average are best able to meet the standards of rigour imposed on the program, but it does not lend credence to the view that community-based research is discriminated against. Many of the academic proposals funded are community-based research. The classification of research as academic or community-based is not possible given the data collected by SWC, because it is presented only in terms of the institutional status of the applicants and not the inherent nature of the research project.

**Relevance:** Comments and ratings varied with respect to the policy relevance of the research. It is useful to separate the comments by group, although it must be noted that variations existed within all groups. Researchers and applicants to the Fund divided their views between those who felt that the work focused specifically on important political questions and drew attention to them and those who felt that the work lacked policy relevance because it was too academic in its orientation or too vague and jargon-laden to be relevant to policy makers. Another subset of those who rated the Fund relatively low on this dimension felt that the research did not focus sufficiently on marginalized groups.

Government officials were also divided in their views. Provincial and federal officials who responded to the survey rated policy relevance quite highly, and observed that the research often focused on important policy gaps. Many of these people also offered comments about the limitations of the work for public policy. In particular, because of long delays in the release of findings the research often appears too late in the policy process to have anything but a marginal impact on actual policy choices. Others noted that the research is useful as background and context in policy discussions, but is not written with policy makers in mind. It is often necessary to distil the essence of the research and its findings and put it in a context that is relevant to policy makers. A small, but significant, minority of government respondents argued that the research had

little relevance for policy because of its overly academic style and/or because it typically misses the window of opportunity to influence policy choices.

Women's organizations also rated the fund highly and noted that the research findings were very relevant to the activities of the organizations. Several noted that SWC must engage in some kind of follow-up to monitor the impact of the research and report progress to various stakeholders. Many organizations reported that they do not have a very clear notion of what happens to the reports and how they are being used to effect change.

**Transparency:** Only researchers and applicants to the fund were queried about the transparency of operations. A small sample of telephone interviews with other groups indicated that they really had no need to know about the operations and were not able to comment on this aspect of the PRF. The fund received its lowest ratings in this area. Only two respondents rated the PRF highly, with the vast majority rating the Fund at five or six out of ten, and many scoring it even lower. Among those who received awards, the most frequently voiced concerns were that they had no idea how the themes for calls for proposals were chosen, that there seemed to be little input from researchers into the process, and that they were not provided with the criteria that were applied to distinguish successful from unsuccessful proposals. Among those who were not successful in their applications, the most frequent concern was that decisions about the lack of success were not explained. Several of these respondents also described SWC staff as unreasonable, inflexible and unwilling to communicate with applicants about the status of their proposals.

Documentation provided by SWC suggests that there is a clear gap between the perceptions of those applicants who expressed concern about transparency of decisions and the procedures followed by SWC. All calls for proposal (both letters to potential applicants and the web site) include a detailed description of the proposal eligibility criteria, description of the theme, description of the selection process, instructions for submitting proposals, proposal format guidelines, and budget guidelines. In addition, potential applicants are invited to contact SWC for additional information. Researchers who were not funded are sent an individualized letter providing reasons for the funding decision. Please refer to Annex B for a sample of this documentation.

**Gender equality:** On this dimension, the fund received its highest ratings. Near unanimity existed that the fund produced research that focused on gender equality issues. Several comments are worthy of note. One person noted that the focus is on gender equality, but there exists a large gap between the research and the reality of gender equality. Another observed that a focus on women's human rights would be broader and closer to the actual focus and language of government policy.

*"I want to acknowledge the value of all research conducted under the Policy Research fund on a broad range of topics, not just this most recent report. The work conducted under the Fund has been, and continues to be, of enormous values to women in a variety of political and non-political positions all across Canada." – Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Newfoundland and Labrador*

**The PRF in Context:** In order to set the PRF in the context of other organizations that conduct similar research and other agencies that offer funding for similar research, respondents were asked to comment on the uniqueness and importance of the PRF, and to identify other organizations that do similar work. Perspective is everything in this case. Assessments varied considerably, with most people being of the view that the PRF is relatively unique and important in the funding and production of policy-relevant research on gender equality issues. A significant number also reported that the Fund was not particularly unique. However, almost all of the respondents, regardless of the assessment provided, offered the same sorts of comments. Many other NGOs (CRIAW and LEAF being most frequently cited) do similar kinds of work with a focus on women's issues and many other organizations and some government departments do similar work from a topic-based perspective. Cuts in research funding generally, and the elimination of the women's program in SSHRC in particular, make the PRF the most important source of funding for research on gender equality issues.

### **The Experience of the Researchers**

Successful applicants to the Fund were interviewed by telephone and asked to comment on their experiences with the application process, the management of the research relationship and the dissemination and promotion of the research products. Applicants who responded to the survey instrument were also asked about the application process. Funded researchers then responded to the same questions as those put to telephone interviewees. Unsuccessful applicants were queried about the explanations they received for the refusal to offer funding and about alternative sources of funding that were sought.

**The Procedures and Processes of the PRF:** According to the staff of the Research Directorate, the procedures and processes of the PRF can be described as follows. The External Committee and the staff of SWC collect ideas from their personal and organizational networks and disciplines about research gaps that need to be addressed. In May of each year, these ideas are debated and one or two themes are chosen. The call for proposals is issued in August with an application deadline in early December. Each call for proposals is mailed to over 750 researchers who are registered on the SWC researcher database. These researchers are located at women's institutes, universities and over 70 national and regional women's groups or community groups. It is also posted on the SWC web site and announced on the two major feminist listservs, Par-L and Netfemmes. Applications are collected into binders and delivered to members of the External Committee. All committee members review all applications and rank them

using the scoring system provided, although certain members are assigned to provide more detailed assessments of each project. SWC staff also review all proposals received. In early February, another meeting is held to discuss the applications and select those that will receive funding. SWC staff provide advice to the External Committee, but staff assessments are not included in the final ranking of scores assigned to the various proposals. The committee seeks to avoid duplication in proposals when they award funding, and seeks a balance among different methodologies. Considerable weight is given to policy relevance and appropriateness of the research to the groups of women that are the focus of the study.

Successful applicants are contacted by telephone and an explanation of the contract, including the publication rights is provided. Unsuccessful applicants are notified by mail of the decision and a brief explanation of the reasons for the decision is provided. When SWC is contacted by a researcher who is seeking a fuller explanation of the funding decision, a fuller explanation is provided, usually by telephone. Research contracts assign the right of first publication to the Government of Canada and contain a clause that prevents researchers from disclosing the findings of the research until certain events occur. If SWC decides not to publish the work, researchers may disclose their findings and pursue other publication venues immediately. If SWC agrees to publish the research, researchers must not disclose their findings until the official publication release.

SWC undertakes to publish research reports following peer review and approval of the report by the External Committee. All comments received during the review process, including those of relevant government departments, are provided as feedback to the researchers. From the receipt of the final manuscript through to the appearance of the finished publication, there is a process of editing, translation and distribution that can take from nine months to one year. The reports are distributed to a standard list of government departments, libraries, women's organizations, research institutes, women's studies programs, and interested individuals, and are posted on the SWC web site for downloading. This standard distribution list is supplemented with additional names of government officials, standing committees and advocacy organizations that depend on the subject of the report. The researcher is also invited to add up to 75 names to the distribution list. The initial dissemination totals approximately 350 reports. Print runs have recently been increased from 1000 to 1500 to meet increased demand.

The following sections report the perceptions of applicants to the Fund and of those successful applicants interviewed by telephone.

**Dissemination of Calls for Proposals:** Views on the effectiveness of the dissemination process for calls for proposal were mixed. Many respondents felt that the process was fine, especially the availability of the calls for proposal on the SWC web site. There was a strong feeling among this group that SWC should develop an electronic means of

dissemination, preferably a listserv that automatically provides email notification of a new call and provides a link to the relevant web page.

There was also a concern that many grass roots organizations, independent researchers and marginalized groups are not adequately served by the current means of dissemination. It was noted that SWC could do more direct outreach to these groups when issuing calls for proposal. One suggestion was that some outreach dollars be channelled through the relevant NGOs to ensure that calls reach the affected groups in the community.

Another group of respondents expressed a concern that the calls for proposal need to define better the parameters and outcomes of the research and to educate potential authors about the meaning and nature of policy relevant research and good policy analysis.

**The Application Process:** The large majority of successful applicants felt that the application process was fair and manageable. There is a sense among NGOs that application process is biased against them and in favour of academics. The reason is that the time devoted to proposal development by an NGO is not compensated. They argue that academic salaries cover the time academics devote to proposal preparation, but no such consideration is available to NGOs. In effect, it is much more costly for an NGO to invest in this kind of activity. The obvious suggestion that arose as a result is that the PRF should make some funds available to encourage NGOs to apply for full research funding on an equal basis. Other negative comments were scattered across a broad range of issues, including confusion over eligibility rules, the time allowed to develop proposals, and the lack of clear criteria for judging the eventual success of proposals.

Among unsuccessful applicants only a small minority agreed that the application process was fair and manageable. The most frequently voiced concern was that the selection criteria for funding decisions were not made available to applicants during the proposal development stage. Again, it is clear that SWC does provide to all applicants detailed documentation that explains the relevant criteria. Please refer to Annex B for a sample of the letter.

Unsuccessful applicants to the fund described the application review process as of little value. These respondents reported little or no feedback from the review process and several noted that the process was very lengthy. Another observed that the process was far too academic and those involved seemed to have little experience with community-based research.

Successful applicants were split on the utility of application review. Many researchers had favourable experiences with the review process and received valuable comments

and suggestions. The major concerns were similar to those of the unsuccessful applicants.

**Project Financing:** The vast majority of researchers interviewed received funding at or very close to the level requested and described it as sufficient to complete the project. Among academics, only one expressed concern about the nature of compensation for time devoted to the project. The course buyout provides the minimum compensation necessary to hire a teaching replacement for the researcher. Among many independent researchers, there is a strong concern that the daily fee, a maximum of \$350/day, is very low compared to that paid by other government departments. One person observed that this amounts to exploitation of women by the very government department charged with the promotion of gender equality. Those who were critical of PRF funding decisions noted that the budget categories were rigid and inflexible and the long delay between submission of an invoice and actual payment of it presented problems for the research team. SWC staff noted that the government standard for payment of invoices is 30 days. In an effort to accommodate researchers' cash flow needs, an advance payment of up to 25% of the amount of the award is made.

**The Contractual Agreement:** Approximately one-half of respondents had no problems with the contractual nature of the agreement. In essence, they or their organizations are set up to deal with such arrangements and are familiar with the reporting and other obligations associated with time-specific deliverables.

This aspect of the PRF presented the greatest problems for researchers who were not set up to deal with contracts. Many found the reporting obligations to be time-consuming and of little value to the end product. Several complained about the need to meet the various obligations imposed on contractors by the federal government's contracting rules. Yet others noted that the contracts were too much like contracts for the purchase of physical goods and services and not suitable for the purchase of intellectual property.

Perhaps the most serious concern was that the staff at SWC was inflexible with regard to the timing and nature of deliverables. One person noted that SWC was inflexible with respect to the timing of research deliverables, but fully prepared to ignore their own deadlines in their obligations to researchers. Another stated that SWC was not prepared to allow research deliverables to evolve in response to changes in the research plan proposed by the research team. This is in contrast to the views of SWC staff, who noted that contract administration is quite flexible and staff was willing to accommodate almost all requests for change, within reason. This group of concerns was reflected in the view by some researchers that SWC staff was not adequately communicative; researchers wanted a closer working relationship during the contract.

**Intellectual Property:** SWC staff noted that they very carefully explained the rules governing intellectual property and the release of findings when they contacted

researchers to discuss the contract. Approximately one-half of researchers had no problems with these rules. The remainder expressed several concerns, all related to the length of time required to release of findings. The most serious concern is that the time required for peer review, author revisions, editing, author approvals, translation, layout, proof reading, printing and distribution (often around one year) means that the findings often come too late in the policy process to influence policy choices and outcomes. It seems that this is a direct result of the Fund being operated as a government program, bound by various government rules, including those related to bilingual publication and review of findings by other government departments. It must be noted that this process does not require a significantly different amount of time than does the publication of an article in an academic journal. There is one important difference. If the Fund is to have a significant impact on real policy choices, the findings must be released during the relevant policy window. For policy relevance, timing is crucial.

A number of academics argued that delays in the release of findings has meant that some researchers were not able to include the research in decisions related to their promotion and tenure, to the detriment of their academic careers. It must be noted that other academic researchers felt that work conducted under the auspices of the Fund did not count for much in academic circles. The reason is that the research contracts of the fund are viewed as private consulting work, in large part, because the universities are not allowed to administer the PRF funds. In general, such consulting work is not seen as meeting the standards necessary for academic credit in promotion and tenure decisions. This is clearly a serious problem for the credibility of the Fund in academic circles, especially given the standards of rigour that the Fund imposes on its research projects.

**Bilingual Publications:** Publications are released in both official languages. A small minority felt that a bilingual publication had little value to them. Most researchers agreed that bilingual publication was of considerable value and had led to greater contact with and feedback from colleagues working in the other official language. Several people noted that this aspect of the program helped to create allies and strengthened the effort to effect change at the political level.

*“Funding allowed us to prepare our report, which served as an information sharing tool that has facilitated communications with interested groups form across Canada. The existence of as English translation has promoted an intercultural exchange on these ideas” – researcher’s letter*

*“We received positive feedback from academics and organizations in Quebec, who would otherwise not have had access to the findings.” – researchers’ feedback form*

A significant minority of respondents wondered at the need for and cost of combining the French and English version in a single copy. Quite simply, the vast majority of users would read the publication in only one language. For those who require both languages, it would be more cost-effective to send them one copy in each language.

**Promotion of the Findings:** Researchers were not directly asked to comment on the promotional efforts for their projects, but the issue came up frequently. For the most part, SWC is reactive with regard to promotion of the findings. Media and other requests are met with basic information about the study and are pointed to the research team. Many respondents felt that this was inadequate and that SWC should actively promote the findings of research projects through press releases and other promotional activities. Of the respondents who did receive media coverage, almost all reported that the coverage was not the result of efforts by SWC, but was due to other factors. In the Fall of 2001, SWC did create and post on its web site a publication entitled *Promoting your Research*. The publication provides researchers with details of SWC promotion efforts and offers insights and strategies regarding research promotion. In general, SWC remains reluctant to promote the research funded by the PRF lest it be seen as advocating the specific positions and recommendations adopted in the research publications.

A large number of researchers noted that they had no idea what happened to the research reports after they had been published and disseminated by SWC. This was generally viewed as being useful information for the researchers, who are interested in learning who the reports are distributed to and how SWC may follow up with any promotional activities.

*"In my view, the decision not to take active measures to publicize reports funded by the PRF seriously detracts from their value. Where the PRF funds studies by organizations that have their own communications departments, these organizations are able to generate the required publicity and media interest for their study, because they undertake the media strategy themselves. Where the study is done by an independent researcher with no organizational backing, that is impossible...." -- researchers' feedback form*

*"The fact that SWC distributed the report was significant in our ability to distribute it widely and to have an impact. – researchers' feedback form*

*"We don't have the resources to track how our work is being used unless people make point of telling us." – researchers' feedback form*

**Unsuccessful Applicants:** The general sense among unsuccessful applicants was that little explanation was offered for the refusal to fund their projects. One respondent noted that successful applicants in the same competition later came to the organization for its expertise, experience and resources. This made the refusal to fund the organization's project even less clear.



A small percentage of the unsuccessful applications did receive funding from other sources, although the funding was at a lower level than that requested of the PRF. Typically, funding was received from a university or provincial government. For the most part, unsuccessful applications meant that the research projects were not undertaken.

## Usage of the PRF Reports

Most of the people interviewed and those who responded to the survey reported that they or their organizations received most of the PRF publications. A small group reported no familiarity with the publications. Among those who received the research reports, the large majority scanned all of the reports and read those of interest and those related to their work and/or volunteer activities. A best guess would be that on average one in five reports is read carefully by the respondents. For the most part, a lack of available time was the main reason why more reports were not read.

Government departments and women's organizations noted that the reports are kept in a library or document centre and were made available to members of the department or organization. Some were open to the public, but the scant evidence available indicated that there was little access by the public. No organization was able to report statistics on the usage of the reports by staff members. These organizations also circulated the research reports to other staff members who might have had an interest in the contents. Several organizations noted that they maintained a direct link from their web sites to the SWC web site. One also reported that they prepared and posted brief abstracts of the research reports on their own web site.

However, the distribution department at SWC has recently increased its demand for copies of reports from 100 to 400 to meet the increased demand from government depository services. Documentation from the files of SWC indicates that the reports are well used by government libraries.

A small group of people also observed that a listserv announcement of new releases and a online abstract would be a useful and convenient way to keep on top of the research reports.

SWC has collected data on the number of web site hits by publication and by year. It should be emphasized that this does not represent the number of downloads of a particular publication. A web site hit on a publication may represent anything from an accidental visit and immediate departure to the careful on-line scrutiny of a publication. That said, the number of hits on all Research Directorate publications has increased from 58,604 in 1999 to 371,493 in 2001. In 2001, the average number of hits per publication was 8,076, with a range from 1,432 to 10,154. It seems clear, that web site access to PRF publications is an important means of disseminating the findings of the research reports.

SWC files also contain feedback from researchers and readers of the reports. These views are solicited through the inclusion of feedback forms in the publications and the delivery of researcher feedback forms to researchers upon the completion of the project. The researcher feedback forms indicate that the research is being used in a wide variety

of ways, ranging from presentations to local governments, workshops and graduate seminars to presentations before Standing Committees of the House of Commons and international conferences. The following table provides a list of where PRF research is been presented based on the researcher feedback forms and researchers letters.

**Table 1. Where PRF Research Findings Have Been Presented**

The following information was gleaned from researchers' feedback forms, readers' feedback forms and letters received by the Research Directorate of Status of Women Canada.

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<p><b><u>Websites</u></b></p> <p>Canadian Women's Health Network            Childcare Resource &amp; Research Unit, University of Toronto            Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW)            Metropolis Project            Netfemmes            PAR-L            Philippine Women Centre (PWC)            Tanis Doe website            University of Alberta            www.housingagain.net            www.web.net/povnet/</p>	<p><b><u>Radio and Magazines</u></b></p> <p>CBC Radio            Radio-Canada            CKNW radio            Co-op Radio  <i>A Voice of our Own</i>  <i>Abilities</i>  <i>Elm Street</i>  <i>Folio</i> (University of Alberta)  <i>Herizons</i>  <i>Macleans</i>  <i>Pacific Rim</i>  <i>Reseau</i> – Magazine de l'Université du Québec)</p>
<p><b><u>Newspapers</u></b></p> <p><i>Fredericton Daily Gleaner</i>  <i>National Post</i>  <i>Saint John Telegraph Journal</i>  <i>St. John's Telegram</i>  <i>The Globe and Mail</i>  <i>The Moncton Times</i>  <i>The News (Maple Ridge)</i>  <i>The Province</i>  <i>Victoria News</i>  <i>Victoria Times Colonist</i>  <i>Voir</i></p>	<p><b><u>Professional Journals</u></b></p> <p><i>Canadian Woman Studies</i>  <i>Canadian Public Policy</i>  <i>Revue canadienne femme et droit</i>  <i>Criminologie</i>  <i>Journal of Feminism and Psychology</i>  <i>Revue Réseau</i></p>

Table 1. *Where PRF Research Findings Have Been Presented (continued)***Books, chapters**

Miedema, Baukje, 1999. Barriers & Strategies: How to Improve Services for Abused Immigrant Women in New Brunswick. Fredericton: Muriel McQueen Ferguson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick.

Friendly, Martha, and Oloman, M., 2000. "Early Childhood Education on the Canadian Policy Landscape" in J. Hayden (ed.) Landscapes in Early Childhood Education. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Friendly, Martha, 2000. In Childhood Care and Education in Canada: Past Present and Future, L. Prochner and N. Howe (eds). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

**NGO publications & newsletters**

BC Non-Profit Housing Association  
 BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, *Transitions*  
 Canadian Council on Social Development, *Bringing Down the Barriers: The Labour Market and Women with Disabilities in Ontario*  
 Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities  
 CRIAW newsletter  
 Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, *Economic Justice Report*  
 Filipino Canadian Youth Alliance Newsletter  
 Maquila Solidarity, "The Labour Behind the Label: How our Clothes are Made" in Stop Sweatshops: an Education Kit  
 Mothers are Women, *When Women Count: Resource Manual on Unpaid Work*  
 National Network on Environments and Women's Health  
 North-South Institute  
 Pauktuutit, *Inuit Women's Health: Overview & Policy Issues*.  
 Philippine Women Centre Update  
 SIKLAB Newsletter (migrant workers group)  
*The Women's Monitor*

**Meetings, Public Forums and Workshops**

Alberta Health Region boards  
 B.C. Federation of Labour  
 Canadian Council for International Cooperation  
 Canadian Human Rights Commission, Feb. 2002  
 Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec, Montréal, avril 1999  
 Community Forum (on Philippine Women), Kalayaan Centre, February 2001  
 Community Forums (on Philippine Women), Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Spring 2001  
 CRIAW Community workshop on homecare: St. John's, Victoria, Yellowknife, and Edmonton, 2000 - 2001  
 CRIAW meetings with international delegations, (e.g. Ethiopian Minister responsible for the Status of Women; Nicaraguan community worker)  
 Disabled Women's Network, Oct. 1998  
*Empowerment of Filipino Mail-Order Brides* Philippine Women Centre  
*Fédération des employées et employés de services publics*, Tribunal des droits de la personne, Montréal, 1996  
 Homelessness Research Panel, Vancouver, February 16, 2001  
 Housing Affordability Partnership & the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria, May 2001  
 Inuit Tapirisat of Canada  
 Law and Geography, University of London, July 2001  
 National Parole Board Dec. 2001  
 North-South Institute  
 Office of the Worker Advisor (Ontario)  
*Poverty Processes in Canada: A Gender Analysis*, University of Surrey, Guildford, England, May 2000  
*Practices, Strategies and Actions for Dealing with Abuse in Immigrant Communities for Social Service Providers*, Fredericton, NB

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**Table 1. Where PRF Research Findings Have Been Presented (continued)**

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**National or International Conferences**

American Psychological Association, Baltimore, 1999  
 American Society of Criminology meetings, Nov. 2000  
 American Sociological Association, 2000  
*Building Bridges: Creating an Integrated Approach to Women's Health*, Victoria, April-May 2000  
 Canadian Association of Geographers, 1999  
 Canadian Association on Gerontology in October 2000  
 Canadian Labour Congress National Pension Conference, Ottawa, February 5, 2001  
 Canadian Political Science Association, Quebec City, June 2000  
 Canadian Social Welfare policy Conference, Montreal, June 1999; and Calgary, June 2001  
 Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, May 2000  
*Era21: End Racism! Activism for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Vancouver, November 2000  
 FAS Summit Conference, Anchorage, Alaska, November 2001  
*Feminist Definitions of Caring Communities and Healthy Lifestyles*, CRIAW conference, Sudbury, October 1999  
*From Criminalization to Victimization*, Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies Conference, Oct. 2001  
*Fusion Women's Health Conference* in Vancouver, April 2000  
*Global Markets*, Harvard University, May 2000  
 International Association on Gerontology Congress, Vancouver, July 2001  
 International Congress on Women, Work and Health, Brazil, 1999  
 Law and Society Association, Budapest, July 2001  
*Made to Measure: Assessing Approaches to Eliminate Gender Inequity*, Halifax, October 1999  
 Metropolis International, November 1999, 2000, and 2001  
 National Council on Family Relations, November 2001  
*Policy Forum on Women's Health & Well Being*, Maritime Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Fredericton  
 Society for Disability Studies, 2000  
 SSHRC Conference on Community Research, June 1999  
 Women's International Solidarity Affair in the Philippines (IWSAP), July 2000  
*Work and Family: Expanding the Horizons*, San Francisco, March 2000

**Achievement of Objectives**

The impact and influence of any research publication is difficult to measure. Respondents were asked to comment concerning the influence of the PRF publications on their thoughts and activities in order to get a sense of their perceptions of the influence and a sense of the achievement of the objectives of the Fund. The thoughts and activities included an increased awareness of women's issues, education purposes, advocacy activities, research activities, policy thinking and policy development.

**Increased Awareness of Women's Issues:** Unsurprisingly, the large majority of respondents indicated that they already possessed a high degree of awareness of women's issues. However, almost all of these people observed that the PRF reports

were important in giving specific form to thoughts about women's issues and in providing a broader and deeper understanding of the experiences and issues facing specific groups of women. These observations held across all categories of respondents.

**Educational Activities:** In terms of educational activities, many academics used the reports in the classroom and/or referred students to them in the preparation of course papers. Women's organizations also used the publications to educate others within their organizations and/or clients served by their organizations. In several cases, specific research reports formed part of the background documentation for workshops put on by the organizations.

*"Details of how CPP is structured were most important. Disabled women need facts and I got very good information from this report." -- reader feedback form*

**Table 2. College and University Courses using PRF reports**

The following information was gleaned from researchers' feedback forms, readers' feedback form and letters received by the Research Directorate of Status of Women Canada.

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Canadian Studies, undergraduate course, Carleton University  
 Community Rehabilitation & Disability Studies, University of Calgary  
 Disability, Law School, UBC  
 Dispute resolution program, York University  
 Families & aging, graduate course, University of Alberta  
 Family Violence Issues, undergraduate course, University of New Brunswick  
 Gender-based analysis, undergraduate course, McGill University  
 Gender and crime, undergraduate course, University of Toronto  
 Land claims course, Nunavut Sivuniksavut program  
 Law School courses, Queen's University  
 Methodologies, graduate course, University of Victoria  
 Public policy, undergraduate course, University of Alberta  
 Régimes étatiques d'indemnisation, undergraduate course, UQAM  
 Régimes étatiques d'indemnisation, graduate course, UQAM  
 Research and Social Policy, graduate course, McMaster  
 Research in Women's Studies, undergraduate course, University of British Columbia  
 Social work, McMaster University  
 Social work, undergraduate course, UQAH  
 Sociology of Aging, University of Winnipeg  
 Sociology of the Family, University of Winnipeg  
 Women and Social Policy, undergraduate course, McMaster  
 Women and the equality deficit, undergraduate course, University of Ottawa  
 Women's health, University of Manitoba  
 Women's studies, undergraduate course, Université d'Ottawa  
 Women's support, undergraduate course, University of Ottawa  
 Women's work, undergraduate course, University of Ottawa

Federal and provincial government officials seldom used the reports for educational purposes, with the exception of those units that were specifically responsible for the implementation of gender-based analysis within their departments. Several respondents stated that the PRF reports informed their activities in this area and, on occasion, were provided to others to help them better understand the implications of gender-based analysis for policy choices.

**Advocacy Activities:** On an organizational level, the research reports have little impact on advocacy activities. Only a few women's organizations reported that the publications were directly useful for advocacy purposes. For the most part, the publications formed part of the landscape that informed advocacy activities. Their influence is mainly informational and contextual.

*"This document and its findings are of significant interest to urban, rural, off-reserve Aboriginal peoples. Our AGM will be an opportunity to discuss this at our Policy Tables. Copies additional to 50 are welcome. Thank you – meegwetch" -- Aboriginal community policy analyst*

Government officials stated that they do not engage in advocacy and that the reports did not have any influence in this context. Several expressed the view that it was part of the job of SWC to advocate for women's issues within the government.

Most of the influence of the research reports on advocacy activities came through the individual efforts of people in women's organizations and of researchers. Many reported that the publications affected their own advocacy activities, often through volunteer work. For some, the influence is as above, with the reports forming part of the background information necessary to support advocacy. For others, the influence is more direct – specific recommendations and resolutions adopted by an organization because of the direct influence of a PRF publication.

**Research Activities:** Only a small minority of respondents reported any significant impact of the PRF publications on their own research activities. These people noted that the publications often helped them to formulate new research questions or affected their research agendas by casting existing research questions in new ways. For a much larger group, the influence of the research reports was minor. The publications provided useful information that formed part of the background for their own research and were useful reference documents.

*"This paper would not have been done without the support of SWC. It allowed us to get on the record some of the work we and others have done on these issues over the last few years, both internationally and nationally, and to start off our advocacy on the Canadian Human Rights Act with some rigorous research and thinking." -- researcher's letter*

**Table 3. Organizations given support to further research based on PRF Reports**

The following information was gleaned from researchers' feedback forms, readers' feedback form and letters received by the Research Directorate of Status of Women Canada.

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Alliance for Employment Equity  
 Association des CLSC et CHSLD  
 Canadian Race Relations Foundation  
 Health Canada  
 International Development Research Council  
 MacArthur Foundation  
 Ministre de la santé et services sociaux du Québec  
 Régies régionales (3)  
 Social Sciences and Humanities Council  
 Veterans Affairs Canada

**Policy Thinking and Policy Development:** In this section, the comments of government officials are reported separately from the other groups that were consulted. For all groups outside of government, the publications were observed to influence policy thinking, but not policy development. The influence was largely contextual in so far as it provided a broader and richer environment from which to consider policy questions. In some cases, it meant that familiar policy issues were examined in a different light. Several of these respondents noted that governments respond to political pressure, but that the PRF publications are not promoted in such a way as to exert any political pressure. Therefore they cannot influence policy choices.

Among federal government officials, a small group felt that the publications had no impact on policy development. Yet another small group of federal officials argued that the publications filled important knowledge gaps and were used within their departments to provide actual policy advice. The majority of respondents noted that it was difficult to tell if the publications influenced policy, but suspected that there was an indirect influence, especially in some sectors such as multiculturalism, identity issues and aboriginal affairs. The influence was through the provision of context and background, rather than directly through recommendations per se. Several observers commented that the publications are not written with policy makers in mind. Many are too academic and jargon-laden to be useful and there is often a clear gap between what policy makers see as useful and useable policy recommendations and what researchers believe constitute policy recommendations. SWC needs to educate researchers as to what constitutes a useful and useable policy recommendation from the government viewpoint. Several people also made the observation that the publications are released too late in the policy process to have any influence on real choices. They suggested that some kind of interdepartmental forum or committee should be established to provide



input into the research agenda and to help promote the publications within government and thereby increase their influence.

*“Facilitating public participation in federal environmental assessments is one of the cornerstones of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act...your study is an important contribution to furthering the discussion on how best to achieve this objective.” -- Sid Gershberg, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency*

*“This research provides important insight into how women contribute to the community through both formal and informal volunteer activities. This study greatly enhances the growing body of research on the voluntary sector; its recommendations are very relevant to the Government of Canada’s Voluntary Sector Initiative.” -- Allan Rock, former Minister of Health, Canada*

*« Soyez donc assurée que les recommandations de ce rapport seront pleinement examinées à mesure que nous entrons dans la phase réglementaire de la consultation publique. » -- Denis Coderre, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Canada*

*“These studies are particularly timely given the current context of the ongoing work of the Reference Group of Ministers on Aboriginal Policy an Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s efforts to reform the Indian Act.” -- Claire Morris, Deputy Minister, Human Resources Development Canada*

Provincial government officials also expressed the belief that the publications affected policy thinking. Again, the influence was as background information and context. All of the provincial respondents agreed that there was no impact on policy development. For several people, the recommendations in the publications were not formulated with governments in mind and were not useable as a result. For several others, the publications were seen as too one-sided in their analysis and unlikely to be adopted by governments who must adopt a more balanced perspective.

There is some evidence that the research conducted under the auspices of the PRF is being considered at the level of public policy discourse. Several government officials reported that the PRF reports have helped to ensure that a gender perspective is introduced into policy choices within their own departments. The collection of reports on the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, entitled *Women and the Canadian Human Rights Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports* has been cited in *Promoting Equality: A New Vision* the report of the Review Panel on the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Other reports have been presented to government Standing Committees and have been cited by Ministers in various public releases. The issue of timeliness is generally related to the length of time required for the release of findings and the possibility that they come too late in the process to have as much influence as they might, had the findings been released earlier. Although some people expressed minor reservations about the selection of themes, there is little concern among the external stakeholders that the topics themselves are timely.

*“I find that the information in this report, and in many other research projects funded by the Status of Women Canada Policy Research Fund, provide valuable analytical tools for the development of public policy...” -- Evelyn Gillespie, Minister of Women’s Equality, British Columbia*

*“While the report naturally focuses on repercussions for women in Quebec, I was especially interested in the authors’ examination of possible repercussions of the Béliveau St-Jacques decision on other Canadian jurisdictions.” -- Shirley McLellan, Minister, Alberta Community Development*

*“Given the current hearings on custody and access, the report...is particularly well timed. It provides information and analysis that both presenters and committee members ought to consider.” -- June Bradley, Minister Responsible for Status of Women, Saskatchewan*

*« Les données démographiques selon les sexes des personnes handicapées...apportent un éclairage nouveau...Malgré que l'étude ait misé sur des situations particulières à certaines administrations canadiennes, plusieurs observations peuvent être applicables à la situation au Québec. » -- Lèa Cousineau, Sous-ministre associée, Secrétariat à la condition féminine Québec*

**Physical Quality of the Publications:** The physical quality, format and appearance of the publications were highly regarded. Most readers described the reports as attractive and distinctive. Several people noted that it would be useful to make the publications available in a variety of formats, particularly formats that would make them accessible to marginalized groups, those without web access and those with lower literacy levels. The most frequent suggestion was to produce more popular and shorter versions of the findings to accompany the standard reports.

On the other side of the coin, several people were not satisfied with the publications, and described them as amateurish and ugly. One researcher also noted that there were many acceptable styles with regard to footnotes and bibliographies, but that SWC forced all authors to a common style. This presented some problems for the author who was required to adopt a new style for this publication. She argued that more freedom should be granted to authors in the matter of style of footnoting and bibliographies.

### **Strengths: What Should Remain the Same?**

It is quite natural that people respond to questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the Fund by spending more time on what should be changed than on what should remain the same. The following two sections provide the responses garnered from the interviews and surveys on such questions. Respondents said much more about what should be changed than about what should remain the same, but this should not be taken as indicative of the overall assessment of the Fund. As indicated by the foregoing sections of this report, the overall assessment of the PRF by the majority of respondents is quite positive.

The overwhelming strength of the Fund is its focus on gender equality issues. There are few other sources of funding and research that provide the same quantity and quality of resources and a focus on policy research from the perspective of women. There was great emphasis that this must remain the focus and rationale for the operations of the

PRF. A large variety of other strengths were also cited and are summarized below, with the most frequently reported comments listed first:

- The preference for creative, independent thinking that produces useful information
- The high quality and readability of the publications
- The diversity of women's experiences that are represented in the work
- The wide range of Canadian material, available in both official languages
- The efforts to fund community-based research, especially for marginalized groups
- The different levels of analysis that are presented and the focus on political aspects of the issues.

### **Weaknesses: What Should Be Changed?**

While there is no clear pattern across groups in the responses above, there is a clear pattern in the responses to the question: what should be changed? Not surprisingly, the pattern reflects the particular interests of each stakeholder group. Each will be dealt with in turn. Again, the responses have been grouped into more general categories of concern.

Researchers and applicants to the Fund expressed a wide variety of concerns and suggestions for change. The suggestions varied according to the orientation of the researcher.

Community-based researchers tended to see the application and awards process as biased in favour of academics. The External Committee was regarded as dominated by academics and the standards applied to projects were those of academe. As a result, the External Committee must be made more inclusive and SWC must provide greater outreach to community-based researchers and groups in order to develop proposals specifically related to community-based work and to ensure that all researchers compete fairly for funding. There is also the concern that the PRF is biased against NGOs because NGOs are not remunerated for time spent in proposal development, while academics are compensated because the development of research proposals is part of their academic duties and covered by their salaries.

Academic researchers presented no common theme with respect to weaknesses and what needs to be changed. The most frequently cited concerns were that the selection criteria needed to be made much clearer to applicants and that the operations of the Fund be much clearer in general. Among the other concerns and suggestions reported were:

- Allow universities, which possess the administrative apparatus to process contracts effectively, to do so

- Provide more flexibility for researchers to move expense items between categories, including personnel and non-personnel items
- Provide more flexibility with regard to deadlines for deliverables
- SWC must adhere to its own deadlines with respect to review activities and publishing activities.

The most frequently voiced concern from women's organizations was that more community-based research should be done, especially with respect to the status of marginalized groups. Among the groups named were poor women, minorities, and rural women. One person noted that a greater focus on regional work would be a useful way to involve more community groups. This might be done through a series of regional workshops and conferences. The second largest concern was that SWC need to improve the timeliness of the release of findings in order to have an actual impact on policy decisions. In connection with this observation, it was noted that there is also a need to follow-up on the findings to determine the actual impact of the research.

By far, the biggest concern of federal and provincial officials was the lack of actual policy influence. For some this was simply an issue of the long delays in the release of findings, for others it was a failure to promote the findings and attract the media attention that would help to bring the issues forward on the policy agenda. Another person felt that SWC was perceived to be an instrument of advocacy within the federal government, a perception that limited its ability and effectiveness to influence the policy agenda. Relatedly, another respondent argued that SWC is perceived as an advocate on women's issues by its external constituency, but its internal focus must be on policy relevant research that affects real choices made by governments. The two roles may conflict. The respondent felt that this tension was often apparent in the operations of the Fund and limited the Fund's ability to affect policy choices.

Several respondents noted that significant portions of the research produced under the auspices of the Fund were simply not relevant to policy makers. There were two reasons offered. First, much of the work is too academically oriented with little or no direct relevance to the issues and choices policy makers must face. Again, it was suggested that SWC should provide some guidance to authors to ensure that they understand what policy makers would find relevant and useful policy analysis. Second, significant parts of the research, especially that by community-based groups, lacked rigor. This work tends to be qualitative, with small samples, and does not meet the methodological standards that allow rigorous, general conclusions to be drawn. In this regard, several people observed that an interdepartmental committee would allow other government departments to help shape the themes for calls for proposals and help to ensure that the research produced is policy relevant.

### Interviews with the External Committee

The current External Committee has five members, three from the academic community, one independent researcher and one representative of the NGO sector. Historically, the Committee has had a higher representation from the academic community, usually four members. The focus of the interviews with current and former members of the External Committee was on the role of the Committee and its relationship to the staff of SWC. On average, External Committee members devote a minimum of four weeks per year of their time to the work of the Committee. Several Committee members suggested that SWC provide a small allowance for External Committee members, in addition to the modest honorarium for attendance at meetings, to allow those without secretarial or administrative support to hire assistants to support their work for the Committee.

One task of the External Committee is to generate ideas about the themes to be addressed by the Fund. Committee members report that they do not consult broadly about potential themes in a direct way, but possible themes are always being considered indirectly in the course of their everyday activities and contacts with members of their personal and professional networks. For most Committee members, serious and explicit thought about potential themes occurs during the weeks and months leading up to the meeting where the themes will be discussed.

The processes of the Committee are viewed as working well in general terms. The atmosphere is collegial and differences in views about proposals are resolved by discussion, with a consensus view usually being achieved on the ranking of proposals for funding. All of those interviewed agreed that the quality of the proposals received is variable. There is no discernable pattern to the variation when we allow for the innate differences in the more academic style of research and community-based research. Good proposals are to be found in both categories of research. One Committee member observed that the real difference that she noted was between junior researchers and more experienced researchers. This difference manifested itself in terms of the preparation and quality of the proposals presented to the Committee and not necessarily in the quality of the ideas for the research. This means that the Committee should always consider “bringing along” the proposals of junior researchers where the ideas are good, but the presentation is less so.

The number and quality of proposals also varies by theme. Themes focused on broadly defined social policy and labour market issues attract the most applications, while themes focused on economic themes, such as taxes and trade, and on specific groups of women attract the fewest proposals. Several Committee members noted that some groups do not seem to be well prepared to conduct research projects and suggested that outreach efforts are needed for these groups in order to strengthen their applications to the Fund.

All of the Committee members who had been through more than one round of applications and decisions agreed that there is not enough money available to fund all of the proposals that merit funding according to the standards of the program.

The staff of SWC provided excellent administrative support to the External Committee. SWC also played its advisory role well and remained within the strictures of the role. The Committee members felt that SWC staff was especially helpful with respect to the Committee's understanding of the federal government's policy agenda and in understanding policy makers' conceptions of policy relevant work. SWC staff reviewed all of the proposals received and offered comments on each, as required by their mandate, but did not interfere in any way with the decisions of the Committee. This aspect of the relationship works particularly well from the point of view of the Committee members.

Several Committee members commented explicitly on the review of findings by other government departments. The view of these members of the Committee was that the reviews often produced very valuable insights into the research findings and their relevance for government policy agendas.

Committee members were also invited to offer their comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the Fund and on what should be changed. There is little unanimity or commonality in the comments received and they are reported as follows:

- There is not as much diversity in the proposals as there could be. There is too much of a focus on regional balance in decisions of the Fund.
- The Fund needs to develop the research capacity of researchers in certain areas and among certain groups, perhaps through the creation of a summer school that would be funded out of the PRF, but separately from the mainstream research budget.
- The decisions of the PRF are not adventurous enough and do not push the frontiers enough.
- There is too much focus on the need for policy recommendations and direct policy relevance. Not every project that is funded must be directly policy relevant and contain concrete recommendations. A great deal of useful research on the condition of women, especially in highly specialized fields, is implicitly excluded from consideration because of the rigid requirement that proposals have an explicit policy focus.
- The time allowed to prepare and research a good research proposal is too short, with the result that many proposals received are vague and ill-formed.

## Analysis and Recommendations

This section of the evaluation report discusses a number of contextual issues that bear on the ability of SWC to achieve the mission of the PRF and focuses on some of the concerns raised by the respondents to the telephone interviews and mail surveys. It also offers recommendations that are more in the nature of suggested directions than concrete changes. The reason for this latter approach is simple: SWC staff is more familiar with the rules and practices that bound their actions than is the evaluator. As a result, SWC is much better placed to find workable directions to the concerns that are raised below. It is also important to recall that the overall evaluation of the PRF is very positive. That the focus of this section is on concerns should not detract from this positive view of the Fund's value and role in its first five years.

The comments in this section reflect the evaluator's perceptions of the major issues and directions for the Policy Research Fund. Not all issues raised by the stakeholders are discussed. Some of the issues that are neglected in this section clearly reflect gaps between the perceptions of stakeholders and the procedures described by SWC staff. Determining the veracity of these competing claims is outside of the mandate of the evaluation. I leave it to staff at SWC to determine the importance and nature of these gaps and to act upon them as required.

My primary focus in the analysis that follows is to try to make the work done under the auspices of the PRF as policy relevant as possible so that it can effect real change in the status of Canadian women. This may sound like it will exclude many types of research that are currently funded and focus the Fund exclusively on projects with concrete policy recommendations that fit well with the current government's agenda. Not so. The current operations of the Fund provide a very nice balance across types of research and communities of researchers and report users, and the direction cited above is entirely consistent with the direction and practice undertaken by SWC.

I have also tried to address other issues, especially the need for outreach as described by many of those interviewed. Each is addressed under headings similar to those found in previous sections. However, I first turn to a number of contextual issues that affect the analysis and to a radical change from the current structure of the PRF.

**General Considerations:** There are a number of factors that complicate the ability of SWC to fulfil the mission of the PRF that are inherent in the structure and operations of the Policy Research Fund. The first derives from the incredibly diverse community that is served by the Fund, each component of which is possessed of its own research methodologies, its own beliefs about research priorities and its own views about policy relevance. There are also different views and beliefs within each community and common views and beliefs shared across these component communities. Each of the

communities that produce and use the research products of the Fund, quite naturally, believes that the Fund should serve its needs and help to advance its broadly defined interests. Each sees the Fund as doing a reasonably good job in these terms, but capable of doing more. Among researchers, there is clearly work that is seen as academic in its orientation and work that is more community-based. While there is no inherent tension or conflict between these two complementary types of research, available research dollars are scarce and each group would like a larger share of the fixed pie. In its own way and in varying degrees, each sees itself at a disadvantage relative to the other group in the competition for funding. For a variety of reasons, government officials are seeking ways to provide greater input into the choices made by the Fund, thereby increasing its direct relevance to their work. National women's organizations seek to effect real change in the status of women. While they see the Fund as an important source of information and understanding, they express concern that not enough is being done with respect to the particular community that they serve and have reservations that the research does not have much impact on the policy choices of governments.

This sounds a bit harsh and, perhaps, overstates the findings described above. Status of Women Canada has done a remarkable job of finding a balance between the competing needs of such diverse communities. In general, the Fund and its work is highly regarded by the communities that it serves and the overall assessment must be quite positive rather than negative. However, the performance of the Fund must be set in the context of the diversity of the community that it serves and the complicating factor described above in order to be fully appreciated.

The second complicating factor is the PRF's location within a government department and its role as a provider of research funding that is meant to produce independent, policy relevant research that will frequently be critical of government policy. There are several aspects to this. First, and quite naturally, the government will not wish to be taken by surprise by the release of findings from a PRF research report and will wish to review the findings in advance of their release, both within SWC and in other relevant departments. Government will also wish to offer clarifications and suggestions that make the findings more relevant to its policy choices. Second, it means that the PRF is quite unique in terms of the opportunities offered, the issues dealt with, and the feedback provided to researchers.

On the other hand, researchers staunchly defend their independence and their right to be critical of existing policy. A third aspect of the Fund's location within a government department is that it is bound by the myriad of government rules regarding contracting, publication in both official languages, etc. Again, the length of time required to review and publish reports, including the need for translation and the simultaneous release in both languages, contributes to the lack of a direct impact of the findings on actual policy choices. This second aspect of the Fund, again inherent in its structure, must also be



considered as a complicating factor in the ability of SWC to achieve the objectives of the Fund.

**A New Agency? No.** Several of the people consulted during the evaluation believe that the solution is to move the Policy Research Fund out of government – perhaps, to become an independent, arm’s length agency with essentially the same mandate as the current PRF. Undoubtedly, some of the tensions described above would be dissipated by such a move. In particular, it would likely result in marginally greater freedom to critique existing policy and, perhaps, in a marginal improvement in the timeliness of the release of findings. The word marginal is an important descriptor here because such an agency would continue to be bound by the obligations of bilingual publication and because the degree of independence under the current PRF is quite high. On the down side, the structure and procedures of the new agency would be critical to its success. It is conceivable that the new agency might be “captured” by one or another of the various communities it serves and that the balance and diversity that are currently represented would be lessened. It is also conceivable that the policy influence of the work would be decreased even further because the agency would be seen as an advocacy group outside of government and largely ignored by those within government. While the ability to generate media attention would increase, actual influence is likely to decrease. The ability to effect real change, that has real consequences for women, requires that the research affect real policy choices. In turn, this means it must penetrate through to policy makers and be useful and useable to them. Working from within the government, as does the current PRF, offers the best possibilities to effect real policy change.

**Increasing Policy Relevance:** None of the foregoing is meant to imply that changes are not needed. The key focus of the recommendations must be to suggest ways to increase the policy influence of the Fund. There are three critical components to this process: ensuring that the right policy issues are contained in the calls for proposals and that the calls are issued in a timely manner; ensuring that researchers understand what constitutes useful and useable policy recommendations, and; releasing the findings in a timely manner so that they have the opportunity to influence choices.

With respect to the issues of the right policy topics being selected and to the timeliness of the calls being issued, the vast majority of the respondents and the evaluator are agreed the SWC has done an excellent job.

One suggestion raised by some federal government officials is to create a greater role for federal government policy makers in the operations of the Fund. Currently, the informal contact of SWC staff with their federal and provincial counterparts is the primary mechanism whereby the work and interests of other government departments are fed into the processes of the PRF. The status quo is certainly an option, but we must recall that a number of federal officials who were interviewed did express concerns

about the policy relevance of the PRF reports. Obviously, some dissatisfaction with the status quo does exist. It is my assessment that SWC staff is knowledgeable about the federal government's agenda and connected quite well to the concerns of other federal government departments.

**Recommendation 1:** Perhaps, the best solution is a regular, yet informal, gathering of federal officials who have an interest and perspective on gender based analysis and who would contribute their thoughts on calls for proposals and departmental policy agendas and thereby help to increase the policy relevance of PRF reports. Essentially, this would represent a more formal strategy for gathering information from federal colleagues than the status quo. Again, this recommendation is made because it is of real importance that the work of the PRF has the largest possible impact on actual policy choices, without compromising the independence of the Fund.

On the other hand, the External Committee is the body responsible for selecting themes for calls for proposals and can have a significant impact on the policy relevance of a call by the choice of theme and how it is expressed to applicants. Obviously, there is no reason for the Committee to adopt a perspective on policy needs and policy relevance that accords with the government policy agenda. Inherent in the independence of the External Committee is the potential to create research themes and make funding decisions that do not address issues of current concern to policy-makers (Note that to address the same issues does not necessarily mean agreement with the government's position).

**Recommendation 2:** Without compromising the independence of the External Committee, it again becomes important that the Committee members understand the government's policy agenda and the ways in which it can be influenced, so as to increase its commitment to and use of gender-based analysis. Again, I believe that it is critical to ensure that the members of the External Committee understand this and understand the policy relevance issue from the point of view of those inside government. SWC staff should take steps to ensure that External Committee members are aware of the concerns and views of other federal government departments with respect to the policy relevance of PRF research.

At the same time, other steps must be taken to try to decrease the release time of the research findings. Again, the problem is the length of time between the completion of the work and the actual release of the findings and the restriction on researchers that the findings cannot be publicly discussed until the publications are released. At a minimum, there must be greater flexibility in decisions about the public release of findings. If a policy issue is on the government's policy agenda and is the subject of current investigation or debate, SWC should expedite the release of findings and post the research reports on its website as a working paper or discussion paper, as is done in many other government departments and in the academic community. SWC had a

legitimate concern that the early release of findings will detract from the eventual publication. Perhaps so, but if the issue is the subject of a policy investigation or debate, is it not better to be timely and perhaps influence real choices, than to be too late to do so?

**Recommendation 3:** The evaluator is not familiar with all of the rules and regulations that govern the process of publication within government, but believes that SWC should investigate alternative ways to release findings and thereby increase their influence.

Translation processes obviously take time and add to the length of time required to produce a publication. Interviews with SWC staff at a number of levels reveal that the process generally works quite well given the requirements of the translation and the need to contract out for much of the translation services. Translation is complicated by the need to find translators able to deal with the “technical” language often found in the reports and the increased time required to translate such language. One concern did arise that may compromise the timely release of findings. Because the SWC translation staff is relatively small and performs a coordinating and quality control function and because of the frequent need for specialized translation services, bottlenecks may arise if the flow of publications from the PRF is not spread out evenly over the course of the year. Quite simply, publications may be delayed at the translation stage because the number arriving at a point in time overwhelms the capacity of translation services that can be called upon. SWC recognizes this potential problem and is working to manage the flow of publications over the course of the year.

**Recommendation 4:** SWC should continue to devote full effort to finding a workable solution to the problem of bottlenecks in the translation process.

It is also necessary to make the External Committee more inclusive. For a variety of reasons and not for lack of effort on the part of SWC, the External Committee is currently and has been historically comprised mostly of academics. The committee must become more representative of the broader community served by the Fund, especially with respect to community-based groups and national women’s organizations. As noted above, SWC does have nomination procedures in place to provide for broad representation on the External Committee. It is not entirely clear why there is not greater representation from NGOs and independent researchers, but one contributing factor seems to be the cost, including the time cost, of serving on the External Committee.

**Recommendation 5:** I have no specific recommendations about how to address this issue. Perhaps an education campaign among national women’s organizations and community-based researchers would help to encourage participation. The campaign would emphasize the importance of the committee in the selection of themes and the

award of funds. It may be necessary to offer fuller compensation for time devoted to the committee.

**Focus of the PRF:** It is clear that the focus of the Fund must remain squarely on creating rigorous, independent, policy relevant research that reflects the diversity of Canadian women. These are the areas in which the PRF receives the highest rating by stakeholders and they are the principles that form the core of the Fund's reason for being.

**Diversity:** Stakeholders regard the effort to capture the diversity of Canadian women quite highly. Most believe that Fund achieves this principle for the most part. However, a significant group believes more can and should be done. One way to do so is to create a program of outreach to those groups that least likely to have access to the publications of the PRF and to make applications to the fund. Essentially, SWC can play an important role, perhaps in partnership with community-based researchers, to increase the capacity of marginalized groups and help them to increase their access to the publications of the Fund and to help provide them with the research skills necessary to prepare research projects that meet the standards of the PRF. Many stakeholders believe that regional workshops should be held to help develop such capacity and it is recommended that SWC consider the merits of such workshops, provided they do not detract greatly from the research funding that is available. Later in this report, suggestions are offered that will free up existing funds for this and other purposes. It must be noted that SWC has already held one such workshop, with a focus on aboriginal communities and researchers.

**Recommendation 6:** SWC should consider the expansion of its outreach programs to ensure that all of the relevant communities have the opportunity to become full participants in the benefits of the PRF. This expansion could include regional workshops and the suggestions for dissemination that are included later in the report.

**Accessibility:** SWC does provide an executive summary with each publication, but these do not seem to be read very extensively or closely by stakeholders.

**Recommendation 7:** In order to increase general awareness of new releases, etc., it is recommended that SWC create a listserv that invites visitors to the web site to sign up and receive regular announcement and abstracts of new publications. The model might follow that of the listserv operated by Canadian Policy Research Networks.

The second concern is that there are many groups who would find the publications inaccessible for a variety of reasons.

**Recommendation 8:** SWC should produce a brief, popular version of the research findings that can be made available to those groups that find current publications

difficult to access. The effective distribution of these research briefs will require the cooperation of women's organizations in order to create cost-effective mailing lists and distribution procedures. This suggestion might be undertaken on a small scale as a pilot project, with appropriate follow-up, to see if it is viable and effective. I would also note that many of those interviewed do not read the full publications, but would read a briefer version of the report. SWC could reduce the size and cost of its print runs, perhaps significantly, by asking those on its mailing list to indicate a preference for the full version or the brief version of a report. The cost savings should be sufficient to fund this and other experiments in report delivery.

**Transparency:** There is clearly a large gap between the reported procedures followed by the SWC and the perceptions of some of the applicants to the Fund. SWC procedures fully disclose the selection criteria applicable to awards and an analysis of various calls for proposal by the evaluator bears this out. Nevertheless, the perception exists that the criteria are not clearly presented to applicants. I have no specific recommendations to deal with this issue, other than to suggest that SWC staff and the External Committee review the wording, placement and dissemination of the selection criteria to ensure that they are presented so as to maximize access and clarity. Perhaps, applicants do not carefully read the entire package of material include with the call for proposals. If this is the case, there is little that SWC can do about this concern, except to try to stress the importance of the selection criteria in various announcements, letters, and other forms of contact with the research community. These same considerations should apply to letters sent to unsuccessful applicants.

**Recommendation 9:** It is recommended that a fuller explanation of the reasons for the refusal to provide funding should be provided to applicants, perhaps with reference to the criteria specifically used to judge research applications.

**Calls for Proposals and Applications:** The major concern is that some marginalized communities are not receiving calls for proposals.

**Recommendation 10:** One possible solution is to use the outreach efforts described above to get a better idea of how widespread this concern actually is within the affected communities. If it is deemed to require action, these same outreach efforts can be used to ensure that mailing lists for the distribution of calls for proposal are complete.

Although the application process is considered onerous and unfair by some groups, it seems to be the lack of capacity and resources rather than anything inherent in the application process that is at the root of the problem. The application process is quite similar to others that exist and changes to it are not recommended. However, SWC may wish to consider steps that would reduce these concerns. For some NGOs, money to cover the time required to develop the proposal is the answer. In fairness, this has implications for indirect costs more generally and raises the issue of university

administration of PRF contracts. It seems that such a solution would open a very large can of worms and likely result in fewer dollars being devoted to the direct costs of research and in fewer projects being funded.

**Recommendation 11:** SWC should consider changes to the application procedure that would reduce the burden on individuals and organizations that find the process onerous. The obvious first step is to canvas those who express the view that the application process is problematic to determine the specific reasons why it is so.

One possible model to reduce the burden is a two-stage application. A two-stage application process has its own disadvantages, but could help to ease the burden on many applicants. Applicants would be invited to prepare a brief proposal that outlines their project and its relevance to the theme. On this basis, a short list is created and those who make the cut are invited to submit a full application. Models of this sort do exist and should be investigated by SWC staff. The advantage is that applicants spend less time in the preparation of proposals that are unlikely to find success and the External Committee spends less time reviewing proposals that are unlikely to be funded. For NGOs, the time cost will be lower, except in those cases where the chances of success are much higher. Other application models may also serve the same purpose and should be considered.

**Funding:** The budget of the PRF is \$1.2 million per year. This figure represents the approximate amount of funding available for research activities under the former Advisory Council. In a typical year, new research funds are about \$660,000, the External Committee and research from the previous year consume about \$80,000, translation, production and printing cost about \$450,000, and research networks, outreach and evaluation cost about \$50,000. In addition, SWC provides other resources that support the work of the Fund. Overall, only 55% of the budget is spent directly on research, with another 37.5% devoted to the production, editing, translation, and dissemination of the research reports. The latter costs are of concern. With the program in full operation, a typical year will result in the production of eight to twelve research reports. Taking the highest figure of twelve reports per year, the translation, production and dissemination costs of the average report amount to \$37,500. Based on my experience as part of the team that established and monitored the operations of the publications unit within the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University, these figures are quite high, especially for production and dissemination.

**Recommendation 12:** I recommend that SWC examine their procedures and suppliers to find ways to reduce these costs so that more resources can be devoted to direct research spending and outreach activities. For example, it is argued that publications must be available in French and English in the same copy because some organizations find this useful. Surely, the vast majority do not (in fact, many respondents complained about the bulk of the current publications). Perhaps, significant cost savings could be

realized by making the appropriate number of copies available in each of the official languages.

As reported by the successful applicants to the Fund, the levels of funding awarded are at or very near the levels requested. In the vast majority of cases, these funding levels were sufficient to carry out the research project. In this regard, no changes are required.

Several independent researchers noted that the level of compensation is much lower than that paid in other government departments. The concern is that only junior-level researchers will be attracted by these compensation levels and the PRF will not attract experienced researchers as applicants.

**Recommendation 13:** SWC should revisit the issue of compensation for independent researchers with a view to increasing compensation levels over time to match those in comparable activities and in comparable departments.

There is also a perception that funding categories are rigid and that SWC is inflexible in its administration of funds. In fact, government rules prevent the transfer of dollars between personnel and non-personnel categories, but that is the only restriction that is imposed. All other expenses must be submitted on the basis of reimbursement, but there is complete freedom available to the researcher to move items around within either of the broad categories described above. These rules seem fair and reasonable. Other concerns about budgeting seem to reflect specific disagreements that are unique to specific projects. SWC has demonstrated a willingness to be as flexible as government rules will allow in dealing with these specific issues, and should continue to do so. Governments are bureaucratic and rule-bound by their natures, but the guiding principle in resolving disputes between SWC and researchers must be to produce meaningful research that has an opportunity to affect policy and improve the status of Canadian women.

**Contracting:** For most researchers, the contractual nature of the research agreement does not present major problems. Indeed, this is the trend in most research funding arrangements.

For some, the administration of contracts does present concerns because they are not set up to deal with the obligations of progress reports and deliverables. Most academics would simply turn the administration over to their university research administrators and be done with many of the budgetary reporting obligations. However, universities would then require that SWC pay a fixed rate over and above the direct costs to cover indirect costs. This would add to the costs of individual projects and in fairness require similar treatment for all other researchers, including NGOs. The result would be fewer projects funded out of the same pot of money. Given the paucity of funding for research specifically devoted to gender equality issues, this would be unacceptable.

However, it is a solution to be considered if more funding can be committed to the PRF and it is decided that this is the best use of the increased funds.

The other group with concerns in this respect is the NGOs. Essentially many are not set up to administer contracts of this sort. In fact, many of the NGOs who took part in the evaluation are largely run on a volunteer basis without the benefit of full-time staff. For these organizations, the problems of administration are compounded many-fold. Should this preclude them from applying to the PRF? Not if wide eligibility is deemed to be a valuable principle for the Fund.

**Recommendation 14:** I recommend that SWC explore this issue in greater depth with its NGO constituency. Perhaps, the only solution is seed grants to help in the development of proposals and some extra funding to cover part of the administrative costs of contracting. Perhaps, the answer lies in a simpler contract and fewer administrative requirements for such groups. Then again, perhaps the PRF cannot serve everyone on an equal footing. The choice among these options must remain with SWC.

**Intellectual Property:** The rules governing research agreements specify that the right of first publication reside in the government of Canada. Most researchers did not seem to have a problem with the assignment of the right of first publication to the government.

Most of the concerns about intellectual property turn out to be about the contract with SWC that limit disclosure of findings prior to the official release of the final publication. My assessment is that this limitation is an important reason for the length of time required to release of findings and the view that the reports may have little direct impact on policy choices.

**Recommendation 16:** My strongest recommendation to SWC is that this limitation must be removed. I have suggested one possible way to do so in an earlier section of the analysis. There may well be others. The point remains that this is a critically important issue to address if the ultimate purpose of the Fund is as I have taken it to be, namely that the research have an influence on policy-making and effect real change in the pursuit of gender equality.



## Annex A

### Published Policy Research Fund Reports BY THEME

#### THE CANADA HEALTH AND SOCIAL TRANSFER AND ITS IMPACTS ON WOMEN

- **Women and the CHST: A Profile of Women Receiving Social Assistance in 1994**  
Katherine Scott, CCSD, Centre for International Statistics
- **Benefiting Canada's Children: Perspectives on Gender and Social Responsibility**  
Christa Freiler and Judy Cerny  
Child Poverty Action Group
- **The Impact of Block Funding on Women with Disabilities**  
Shirley Masuda  
DAWN Canada
- **Women's Support, Women's Work: Child Care in an Era of Deficit Reduction, Devolution, Downsizing and Deregulation**  
Gillian Doherty, Martha Friendly and Mab Oloman
- **Women and the Equality Deficit: The Impact of Restructuring Canada's Social Programs**  
Shelagh Day and Gwen Brodsky
- **Who will be Responsible for Providing Care? The impact of the Shift to Ambulatory Care and of Social Economy Policies on Quebec Women**  
Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale (AFÉAS), Denyse Côté, Éric Gagnon, Claude Gilbert, Nancy Guberman, Francine Saillant, Nicole Thivierge, Marielle Tremblay

#### WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

- **A Complex Web: Access to Justice for Abused Immigrant Women in New Brunswick**  
Baukje Miedema and Sandra Wachholz
- **Access to Justice for Sexual Harassment Victims: the Impact of *Béliveau St-Jacques* on Female Workers' Rights to Damages**  
Katherine Lippel and Diane Demers
  - **Family Mediation in Canada: Implications for Women's Equality**  
Yvonne Peters, Sandra Goundry, Rosalind Currie, Equality Matters!  
Consulting
- **Getting a Foot in the Door: Women, Civil Legal Aid and Access to Justice**  
Lisa Addario and the National Association of Women and the Law

CUSTODY AND ACCESS (URGENT ISSUE)

- **Spousal Violence in Custody and Access Disputes: Recommendations for Reform**  
 Nicholas M. C. Bala, Lorne D. Bertrand, Joanne J. Paetsch,  
 Bartha Maria Knoppers, Joseph P. Hornick, Jean-François Noel,  
 Lorraine Boudreau, Susan W. Miklas  
 The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family
- **Relocation of Custodial Parents**  
 Martha Bailey, Michelle Giroux

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE STATE,  
 WOMEN'S PAID AND UNPAID WORK, AND WOMEN'S VULNERABILITY  
 TO POVERTY

- **Unpaid Work and Macroeconomics: New Discussions, New Tools for Action**  
 Isabella Bakker
- **Policy Options to Improve Standards for Women Garment Workers in Canada and Internationally**  
 Maquila Solidarity Network (Canada)  
 Lynda Yanz, Bob Jeffcott, Deena Ladd, Joan Atlin
- **Gender on the Line: Technology, Restructuring and the Reorganization of Work in the Call Centre Industry**  
 Ruth M. Buchanan and Sarah Koch-Schulte
- **Disability-related Support Arrangements, Policy Options and Implications for Women's Equality**  
 The Roeher Institute
- **Social and Community Indicators for Evaluating Women's Work in Communities**  
 Louise Toupin and Nadine Goudreault  
 Relais-Femmes
- **Women and Homework: The Canadian Legislative Framework**  
 Stephanie Bernstein, Katherine Lippel and Lucie Lamarche
- **Aboriginal Women and Jobs: Challenges and Issues for Employability Programs in Quebec**  
*Le Partenariat Mikimon*, Association des Femmes Autochtones du Québec /  
 INRS-Culture et Société  
 Carole Lévesque, Nadine Trudeau, Joséphine Bacon, Christiane Montpetit  
 Marie-Anne Cheezo, Manon Lamontagne, Christine Sioui Wawanoloath

THE INTEGRATION OF DIVERSITY INTO POLICY RESEARCH,  
DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS

- **Employment Equity Policy in Canada: An Interprovincial Comparison**  
Abigail B. Bakan, Audrey Kobayashi
- **Substance Use and Pregnancy: Conceiving Women in the Policy Making Process**  
Deborah Rutman, Marilyn Callahan, Audrey Lundquist, Suzanne Jackson, and Barbara Field
- **Sponsorship...For Better or For Worse: The Impact of Sponsorship on the Equality Rights of Immigrant Women**  
Andrée Côté, Michèle Kérisit, Marie-Louise Côté  
Table féministe francophone de concertation provinciale de l'Ontario
- **Women's Movements and State Feminism: Integrating Diversity into Public Policy**  
Jill Vickers, L. Pauline Rankin, with the research assistance of Ann-Marie Field
- **North American Indian, Metis and Inuit Women Speak About Culture, Education and Work**  
Carolyn Kenny

REDUCING WOMEN'S POVERTY: POLICY OPTIONS, DIRECTIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

- **The Changing Nature of Home Care and its Impact on Women's Vulnerability to Poverty**  
Marika Morris, Jane Robinson, Janet Simpson  
for the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
- **The Dynamics of Women's Poverty in Canada**  
Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) Katherine Scott, Clarence Lochhead
- **Reducing Poverty Among Older Women: The Potential of Retirement Incomes Policies**  
Monica Townson
- **Building Capacity: Enhancing Women's Economic Participation Through Housing**  
Laura C. Johnson and Allison Ruddock for the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association
- **Social Policy, Gender Inequality and Poverty**  
Lorraine Davies, Julie Ann McMullin and William R. Avison with Gale L. Cassidy

- **Economic Impact of Health, Income Security and Labour Policies on Informal Caregivers of Frail Seniors**

Janet Fast, Jacquie Eales and Norah Keating

FACTORING DIVERSITY INTO POLICY ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT:  
NEW TOOLS, FRAMEWORKS, METHODS, AND APPLICATIONS

- **Enabling Income: CPP Disability Benefits and Women with Disabilities**  
Tanis Doe and Sally Kimpson
- **If Gender Mattered: A Case Study of Inuit Women, Land Claims and the Voisey's Bay Nickel Project**  
Linda Archibald and Mary Crnkovich
- **Housing Policy Options for Women Living in Urban Poverty: An Action Research Project in Three Canadian Cities**  
Marge Reitsma-Street, Josie Schofield, Brishkai Lund and Colleen Kasting  
Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria
- **Taking Risks: Incorporating Gender and Culture into the Classification and Assessment of Federally Sentenced Women in Canada**  
Kelly Hannah-Moffat and Margaret Shaw

WOMEN AND THE CANADIAN TAX SYSTEM

- **Women, Tax and Social Programs: The Gendered Impact of Funding Social Programs Through the Tax System**  
Claire F.L. Young
- **Mothers as Earners, Mothers as Carers: Responsibility for Children, Social Policy and the Tax System**  
Christa Freiler, Felicite Stairs, Brigitte Kitchen with Judy Cerny

THE INTERSECTION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION: THE  
IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY CHANGES FOR WOMEN IN LESBIAN  
RELATIONSHIPS

- **The Impact of Relationship Recognition on Lesbian Women in Canada: Still Separate and Only Somewhat Equivalent**  
Kathleen A. Lahey
- **Recognition of Lesbian Couples: An Inalienable Right**  
Irène Demczuk, Michèle Caron, Ruth Rose, Lyne Bouchard

TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN: THE CANADIAN DIMENSION

- **Canada: the New Frontier for Filipino Mail-Order Brides**  
Philippine Women Centre of British Columbia
- **Migrant Sex Workers from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: The Canadian Case**  
Lynn McDonald, Brooke Moore and Natalya Timoshkina
- **Trafficking in Women in Canada: A Critical Analysis of the Legal Framework Governing Immigrant Live-in Caregivers and Mail-Order Brides**  
Louise Langevin and Marie-Claire Belleau

WOMEN AND THE CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT (URGENT ISSUE)

- **Women and the Canadian Human Rights Act: A Collection of Policy Research Reports**  
Shelagh Day and Gwen Brodsky  
Donna Greschner and Mark Prescott  
Martha Jackman and Bruce Porter  
Sandy Welsh, Myrna Dawson and Elizabeth Griffiths

YOUNG WOMEN AT RISK

- **On Her Own: Young Women and Homelessness in Canada**  
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association  
with researchers Sylvia Novac, Margaret Eberle, Luba Serge and Joyce Brown

FIRST NATIONS WOMEN, GOVERNANCE AND THE INDIAN ACT (URGENT ISSUE)

- First Nations Women, Governance and the *Indian Act*: A Collection of Policy Research Reports**  
Judith F. Sayers and Kelly L. MacDonald  
Jo-Anne Fiske, Melonie Newell and Evelyn George  
Wendy Cornet

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- **Gendering Immigration/Integration: Policy Research Workshop Proceedings and A Selective Review of Policy Research Literature, 1987-1996**  
Sharon Abu-Laban, Lori Wilkinson, Danielle Juteau, and Patricia Bittar

- **Finding Data on Women: A Guide to Major Sources at Statistics Canada**  
Marcia Almey, Statistics Canada
- **Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development**  
Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory Kipling
- **Gender Equality Indicators: Public Concerns and Public Policies**  
Leroy Stone, Zeynep Karman and Pamela Yaremko (editors)
- **The 1996 Census Unpaid Work Data Evaluation Study**  
Leroy O. Stone and Sandra Swain, Statistics Canada

## *Annex B*

### **Sample Documentation Re: Call for Proposals**

August 30, 2001

Dear Colleague:

**I am writing to invite you to submit a proposal to Status of Women Canada's (SWC) Policy Research Fund (PRF) on the theme *Trade Agreements and Women*. Proposals must be received no later than 5:00 (e.s.t.), Tuesday, December 4, 2001. Faxed copies will be accepted until Friday, November 30, 2001 only. If you wish to submit your proposal via e-mail (Word 97 or Word 6.0 for Windows 95 only) please forward to: [research@swc-cfc.gc.ca](mailto:research@swc-cfc.gc.ca) no later than November 30, 2001.**

In keeping with the guiding principles of the PRF, a wide range of researchers are eligible to submit proposals, including individual researchers, researchers working at universities, research organizations, women's organizations, other equality-seeking and advocacy groups, and partnerships involving several groups or individuals. We also welcome partnerships between experienced researchers and emerging researchers. Please note that researchers whose proposals are selected for funding will be offered a research contract which must be signed by the individual researcher/s or non-government organizations.

Research projects which can be completed within one calendar year are encouraged. However, longer-term, multi-year projects will also be considered, as appropriate.

Attached to this letter is information on:

- **proposal eligibility criteria**, which stress the importance of the policy relevance, originality, national relevance, and women's equality focus of the research proposals being submitted;
- **theme for September 2001: *Trade Agreements and Women***;
- **selection process**;
- **instructions for submitting proposals**;
- **proposal format**, listing the content that each proposal should include;
- **budget guidelines**, describing the eligible and ineligible expenses for the itemized budgets that must accompany each proposal.

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**Please send all proposals to:**

**Research Directorate  
Status of Women Canada  
123 Slater Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1H9  
fax: (613) 957-3359**

This call for proposals will be posted on our web site as usual  
(<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca>).

Should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Status of Women Canada at (613) 995-3995. Please also feel free to share this information with any groups or individuals who may be interested.

Thank you for your interest in Status of Women Canada's Policy Research Fund.

Sincerely,

Zeynep Karman  
Director, Research

Attachments



## **PROPOSAL ELIGIBILITY**

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**To be considered for funding, research proposals must demonstrate that they meet the following four necessary conditions:**

### **1. Policy research**

Only policy research proposals will be funded. SWC defines **policy research** as research whose primary focus is linked to the public policy agenda, and whose results are useful to the development of public policies that advance the status of women.

**For research to be considered *policy research*, it must:**

- identify policy gaps, new policy questions, emerging trends or new policy issues, and propose new policy directions and options; or
- propose frameworks for the evaluation, analysis and critique of existing policies, and demonstrate the use of the framework in developing concrete alternatives to an existing policy or policies.

- ⇒ Research proposals will not be considered if:
- ⇒ the proposed research is not directly linked to public policy;
  - ⇒ the proposed research focuses exclusively on critiquing existing policies or describing a policy 'problem', without proposing policy solutions; or
  - ⇒ the proposal does not demonstrate how the research findings and recommendations will be useful to policy-makers, policy advocates, women's groups and others participants in the policy process.

### **2. Original Contribution**

Research proposals must demonstrate how the research findings and policy recommendations will make an innovative, value-added contribution to the public policy debate, and how they build on existing policy research.

- ⇒ Research proposals will not be considered for funding if the policy research question(s) has been sufficiently documented in existing research.

### **3. National Relevance**

Issues of national relevance are those which have implications for women's equality in Canada. The following types of policy research *can* be considered nationally relevant:

- Policy research conducted in a specific locality, province or region of Canada, including the data collection and analysis;
- Policy research on issues that do not fall under federal jurisdiction (for example, education or social services).

In all of the above cases, proposals **must demonstrate** how the research findings are linked to events and trends in other parts of Canada, and how the policy recommendations are applicable in other parts of Canada.

International comparative research can be considered if the contributions to Canadian policy research and development are well demonstrated. Include an explanation of the relevance of the countries chosen for comparison. (Please note in the budget guidelines also attached that travel outside Canada will not be funded.)

⇒ Proposals will not be considered for funding if the proposed research focuses exclusively on a specific 'local' issue without demonstrating how the findings are relevant in other parts of the country.

### **4. Advancement of Women's Equality**

Status of Women Canada seeks to advance the equality of all women. All research proposals must demonstrate how the research findings and policy recommendations will contribute to advancing women's equality, while recognizing the diversity among women (e.g. race, Aboriginal status, language, age, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status etc.). Research proposals dealing with particular groups are also eligible for funding.

⇒ Proposals will not be considered for funding if

- women's equality is not central to the research being conducted
- diversity is not taken into account in terms of the objectives and/or limitations of the study

## THEME: TRADE AGREEMENTS AND WOMEN

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### Context

Over the last two decades we have witnessed some major changes in the global economy. The process we generally refer to as economic globalization is mainly related to the integration of national economies in the world market through liberalization of trade, global mobility of capital and the implementation of international trade agreements. All these changes, facilitated by a rapid advance in telecommunications technology, have triggered significant structural transformations of the modern societies that need to be further examined.

There is an assumption promoted by the advocates of trade liberalization that eliminating any obstacle to the “free” economic activity will lead to economic growth and improved standards of living in trade oriented countries. Trade agreements and multilateral trade organizations were set up to regulate and monitor the system of trade relations among these countries.

Although initially trade negotiations evolved around issues of reducing tariff and other barriers to market access, over the past decade they have expanded to include a more comprehensive trade liberalization agenda. Many concerns have been raised about trade agreements’ addressing issues such as investment, intellectual property and services, and administration of industrial, social, health and environmental regulations.

Canada is one of the key players in the process of international trade liberalization. In the year 2000, close to 46% of Canada’s Gross Domestic Product came from exports<sup>1</sup> and one out of three jobs on the market depends on it. As a founding member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and one of the world’s largest trading nations, Canada is in the position to make critical decisions with respect to the world trade in general. That is why Canadian government has even greater responsibility to address some concerns and critiques regarding the content of trade agreements coming from women’s groups, Aboriginal women, other equality seeking organizations, academics, researchers and the public in large.

### Gender Perspective and Feminist Critique

Women’s advocate groups, feminist scholars and other actors interested in equality issues have been stressing since the beginning of the trade debate that trade policies are not gender neutral. Governments are seen as increasingly giving priority to economic, market values over social and community ones.

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<sup>1</sup> *Trade Update 2001: Second annual Report on Canada’s State of Trade*, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Economic and Trade Analysis Division, 2001. The report is available at: <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/eet/state-of-trade-e.asp>

There is concern that women may be particularly affected by such policies, because they are more dependent on state-supported programs and more involved in community life. Even beyond the realm of labour market, some feminists foresee that the gender effects of trade liberalization will affect women, directly or indirectly, in all of their gendered roles, e.g. as consumers, entrepreneurs, cultural reproducers, mothers, carers, etc. Moreover, these effects will crosscut the diversity of women, and may affect unequally women of different age, class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, etc.

The adverse gendered effects of globalization have been already widely criticized, especially as they affect women in developing countries. However, there is an increasing need to understand how this process affects women in developed western societies. Researchers and analysts are often divided between those who see only the negative impacts of trade liberalization and others who adopt more positive attitude, promoting the theory of economic growth and well-being that should come as a result of it. A considerable knowledge gap still remains in many areas of research on gender impact of trade policies.

## **Areas for Policy Research Proposals**

Given the complexity and the many facets of this phenomenon that research may address, we invite proposals that examine public policies and programs and develop policy options related to trade agreements, including but not restricted to the following:

- 1) **Content analysis of the trade agreements** signed or currently under negotiations by Canada, such as General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Canada-European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and others, as well as the implications of Canada's membership in multilateral trade organizations and forums, such as WTO and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Example of research questions under this perspective: What can we learn from trade agreements and how can this knowledge be used to advocate for more effective policy choices? Which particular trade agreements or their parts (sections) may have negative or positive consequences for women? What are these consequences? Are trade agreements so designed as to take into account women, their socio-economic condition, their point of view, and if yes, how? What kind of ideology lies beneath the rhetoric of trade discourse and what does it imply for women? What policies or policy directions may promote equality for women as a result of trade agreements' implementation?
- 2) **Impacts on women of trade agreements: economic, social, political and human rights issues.** Examples: How will the liberalization of trade affect women workers segregated in sectors (e.g. services) that do not directly benefit from the export-oriented trade economy? Is there a direct link between

the policy of reducing tariffs and corporate taxes and decreased state investment in social services, and what are the consequences of such policies for women? How are women employees affected by the increased demand for competitiveness and flexibility, combined with more stressful working conditions? Is there a differential impact on women and men in that regard? What are the positive effects of trade agreements that improve women's lives? What are the lessons learned from international experiences with trade agreements (case studies are welcomed)? What can we learn from the legal analysis of these agreements in terms of women's rights and human rights?

- 3) **Women's participation in the process of macroeconomic policy-making:** What are the ways to maximize women's involvement and intervention on the national, regional and international levels of trade policy negotiations? How can gender perspective be most effectively introduced to the actual trade agreements and be best represented in the future ones? How can trade policies be shaped to best promote the standard of living and gender equality?
- 4) **Implementation of trade agreements:** Trade policy consists not only of negotiations, but also of administration and implementation of the commitments made by the contracting governments. Given the commitments of Canadian government in the international trade agreements it has signed, how does Canada live up to these commitments and how is this legislation affecting the domestic policy-making? What do these commitments entail for women? What are the anticipated, long-term effects of the implementation of trade agreements versus short-term results, and could we expect different outcomes depending on the time frame?

These suggestions are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to give examples of questions researchers may consider. We encourage research which develops policy options and responses, examines existing public policy, provides inter-provincial or inter-jurisdictional comparative analysis, and which examines the intersection of race, ability and gender.

## **Selection Process**

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The selection process has three stages: screening for completeness, eligibility, and conformity to the research theme; review by the external committee to the Policy Research Fund; and final research project selection based on availability of resources.

Selected projects will be funded through a contractual agreement between Status of Women Canada and the proposal author.

## **Instructions for Submitting Proposals**

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Proposals must be no longer than five pages (12pt font), single-spaced, to which researchers' résumés (no longer than five pages), project time-lines and budgets should be attached. Reviewers will not assess any materials that exceed this limit. Please note that cover letters and letters of support will not be assessed as part of your proposal. Please indicate the title of your proposal.

Proposals must be received no later than 5:00 (e.s.t.), **Tuesday December 4, 2001**, and be addressed to:

**Research Directorate  
Status of Women Canada  
123 Slater Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1P 1H9  
fax: (613) 957-3359**

Proposals should be submitted in hard copy format **without binding**. **Faxed and e-mailed copies will be accepted until November 30, 2001 only.**

General inquiries should be directed to Status of Women Canada at (613) 995-3995.

## Proposal Format

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All research proposals must contain information that responds to the questions listed below. The research proposal must be written in 12pt font and must not exceed five pages, single-spaced (excluding the attached documents).

### 1. Policy/National Relevance

- ◆ What public policy (or potential public policy) does the proposed research address?
- ◆ What concrete policy recommendations/options could result from the research findings?
- ◆ How will your research be useful to equality-seeking organizations, advocacy communities, government policy makers, researchers, women's groups and other target audiences?
- ◆ How is this research nationally relevant?

### 2. Research Objectives

- ◆ What is the purpose of your research?
- ◆ What is your research question?
- ◆ Why should it be seen as an emerging issue?
- ◆ How does your research relate to the call for proposals?
- ◆ How will your research contribute to advancing women's equality?
- ◆ How does your research take into account the diversity among Canadian women? Will your research apply to all women or a particular group(s) of women and why was that study population chosen?

### 3. Context

- ◆ What research has already been done in the area? Please give references.
- ◆ What knowledge gaps will your research fill? What original contribution will it make?
- ◆ What current policies or policy trend is this research related to?

### 4. Methodology

- ◆ How will the data be collected?
- ◆ How will the information be analyzed?
- ◆ Why is the proposed method appropriate to the study and the group being studied?
- ◆ How will your research method enable you to achieve your research objectives?
- ◆ If your research involves human subjects, how will you ensure confidentiality and/or anonymity, obtain consent, etc.? What ethical guidelines do you use?\*
- ◆ What are the expected timelines to achieve each stage of the project?

### 5. Roles and Responsibilities of the Research Team

- ◆ Who are the researchers? (résumés of the research team - maximum of 5 pages each)
- ◆ What are the roles and responsibilities of each person involved in the research process (e.g.: research assistants, researchers)?

**6. All of the following documents must be attached to complete the proposal:**

- ◆ selected bibliography of documents, articles, books referred to in the proposal;
- ◆ résumés of researchers (maximum of five pages per résumé);
- ◆ a time-line or schedule of activities, interim reports and completion dates;
- ◆ detailed, itemized budget (guidelines attached). Please note that projects longer than one year should indicate the amount to be spent by the end of each fiscal year (March 31).
- ◆ partnership agreements between organizations (if applicable).

\* For example: *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, see <http://www.nserc.ca/programs/ethics/english/policy.htm>



## Budget Guidelines

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### Eligible expenses

NOTE: While a maximum budget limit has not been set, given available resources, requests in excess of \$100,000 will be considered **exceptional**.

Researcher fees and costs of research assistants<sup>2</sup>;

- data collection and analysis
- editing the final report and other written material;
- support services for word processing, transcription, note-taking and general translation fees directly related to the research project;
- honoraria for research participants, where appropriate. Honoraria are intended to cover transportation, meals, child care costs and other necessary expenses for those who would be financially unable to participate otherwise;
- costs related to an organization's involvement in the research process (i.e. direct contribution of staff time, use of organization's meeting space and other resources);
- purchase of data (including statistical tabulations), books and reports directly related to the research project and unavailable from other sources;
- general office expenses directly related to the research project being funded, including equipment leasing, long-distance phone calls, postage, office supplies, and other related expenses. Please refer to ineligible expenses for office expenses that cannot be charged against the research project budget;
- travel expenses incurred by the researchers directly related to the research project, to be reimbursed according to Treasury Board Guidelines<sup>3</sup> ;
- child care expenses for meetings, according to Treasury Board Guidelines.
- relevant taxes must be included in the budget.

### Ineligible expenses

- any costs incurred prior to the contract being awarded;
- except in exceptional circumstances (e.g., joint funding agreements), policy research activities for which research funds have been received from other research granting organizations. Researcher(s) are required to list the research funds they have requested from other granting bodies (including federal government departments) for the research project or any part thereof submitted to Status of Women Canada's Policy Research Fund;
- administrative fees to institutions, including universities and other organizations;
- costs related to translation, production, printing and dissemination of the research results. This includes publishing in newsletters, attending conferences to present results and other methods of communicating the research results.
- research by the principal researcher(s) and/or the contract signator(s) leading to a degree;
- the cost of membership in professional associations;
- professional training or development, including computer and language training;
- entertainment and hospitality costs;
- capital expenditures, including the purchase of computer and other office equipment, furniture, etc.;
- preparation of communications material, including teaching material, articles for newsletters, etc.;
- rental of office space;
- contingency allowances or other unidentified 'miscellaneous' fees.
- expenses for travel outside Canada

<sup>2</sup> The external committee to the PRF has recommended a maximum of up to \$350 per day for primary researchers, and a maximum of \$200 per day for assistant researchers, based on qualifications. Researchers in salaried positions at a university will be permitted a maximum of \$5,000 for "course buy-out".

<sup>3</sup> Available on request.