

# **Public Policy and the Participation of Rural Nova Scotia Women in the New Economy**

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The Women's Economic Equality (WEE) Society in Partnership with the Hypatia Project

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## ABSTRACT

*Public Policy and the Participation of Rural Nova Scotia Women in the New Economy* is the final report of a research project that addressed two main questions: How can rural women take advantage of new economy opportunities, particularly those linked to new technologies? And, what kind of policies do rural women need to facilitate their full participation in the new economy? The research, carried out in Nova Scotia between April 2003 and January 2004, employed multiple methods (literature review, documentary analysis, interviews and statistical analysis).

A significant number of federal and provincial public policies and resultant programs were examined to identify the key contributors to women's economic status. Consultations with service providers and with those involved in the policy process at provincial and regional federal levels explored issues facing rural women in the new economy, and barriers resulting from policies and policy implementation.

The greatest challenges to women's full participation in the new economy are found in economic policies that do not pay attention to rural women, social policies that are inadequate and exclusionary, and the lack of widespread integration of social and economic policies. Inclusion will only be a reality if these policies are constructed within a system-wide framework of gender awareness and accountability. Overall system-wide policies and strategies must be implemented to identify places in the inter- and intra-governmental systems where the needs of particular groups of women are not met.

Women are invisible in economic policies in Nova Scotia and Canada. In fact, policy makers discount the very notion that gender has anything to do with economic policy. This infers that economic policy is unrelated to issues that fall within a social policy framework, such as child care and income assistance levels. The evidence demonstrates quite the opposite. The preference for gender-neutral policies has actually neglected women and worked against women's economic progress.

A range of policy reforms must be considered for rural women to participate fully. The report includes recommendations for federally and provincially mandated gender analysis in decision making and program accountability in economic and social policy processes, as well as suggestions for particular economic, social and rural policies.

The research was conducted as a Nova Scotia case study, but many of the findings have broader application to women in rural areas in other provinces and territories.



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACOA	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
AIP	Atlantic Investment Partnership
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CAP	Community Access Program
CBDC	Community Business Development Corporation
CCWEST	Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science and Technology
CCSD	Canadian Council on Social Development
CED	Community Economic Development
CEDAW	Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women
CFIB	Canadian Federation of Independent Business
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CLN	Community Learning Network
CMA	Census Metropolitan Areas
CPP	Canada Pension Plan
CRF	Consolidated Revenue Funding
DCS	Department of Community Services, Province of Nova Scotia
EI	Employment Insurance
EO	Equal Opportunity
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FCP	Federal Contractors Program
GBA	Gender-based analysis
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPI	Genuine Progress Index or Indicator
HRDC	Human Resources Development Canada
ICT	Information and communication technology
LEEP	Legislated Employment Equity Program
LICO	Low Income Cut-Off
LIM	Low Income Measure
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreement
NSACSW	Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
NSBI	Nova Scotia Business Inc.
NSCC	Nova Scotia Community College
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLAR	Prior learning assessment and recognition
RDA	Regional development agency or authority
SWC	Status of Women Canada
WBI	Women in Business Initiative
WEE	Women's Economic Equality Society

## PREFACE

Good public policy depends on good policy research. In recognition of this, Status of Women Canada instituted the Policy Research Fund in 1996. It supports gender-based policy research on public policy issues in need of gender-based analysis. Our objective is to enhance public debate on gender equality issues to enable individuals, organizations, policy makers and policy analysts to participate more effectively in the development of equitable policy.

The focus of the research may be on long-term, emerging policy issues or short-term policy issues that require an analysis of their gender implications. Funding is awarded through an open, competitive call for proposals. A non-governmental, external committee plays a key role in identifying policy research priorities, selecting research proposals for funding and evaluating the final reports.

This policy research paper was proposed and developed under a call for proposals in September 2002, entitled *Restructuring in Rural Canada: Policy Implications for Rural Women*. Research projects funded by Status of Women Canada on this theme examine issues such as the impact of long-term care patient classification systems on women employed as caregivers in rural nursing homes; rural women's experiences of maternity care in British Columbia; farm women and Canadian agricultural policy; the employment of women in Canadian forestry and agri-food industries; and the participation of rural Nova Scotia Women in the new economy.

A complete list of the research projects funded under this call for proposals is included at the end of this report.

We thank all the researchers for their contribution to the public policy debate.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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We are most grateful to those individuals from community organizations and agencies who gave freely of their time to take part in our interviews. Their insights were crucial when considering how policies impact the lives of rural Nova Scotia women. In addition, we thank the many government officials for participating in our consultations and for providing a government perspective on public policy. Your contributions were valuable and greatly appreciated.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr. Ann Manicom** has taught in the fields of education and women's studies for 25 years and has worked provincially, nationally and internationally on gender issues in public and post-secondary education. She is the co-editor of the book *Knowledge, Experience and Ruling Relations* (University of Toronto Press, 1995). She is a member of the Hypatia Project and serves on the management committee of Nova Scotia Women's Fishnet, which works with women in coastal communities.

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**Doreen Parsons** lives and works in rural Nova Scotia where she develops and co-ordinates programs for the WEE Society, promoting the full participation of rural women in community economic development (CED) across the province. She has been an educator and CED practitioner for more than 20 years, working locally, provincially and nationally on economic equality issues. For many years, Doreen led HRDA Enterprises Limited, a CED corporation in Halifax, where she managed businesses and training programs for people challenged by poverty.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Economic and social restructuring has affected women's livelihoods in rural communities in Nova Scotia. The new economy, through the forces of globalization, increased competition, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), is changing the way people do business. For rural areas, this can mean declines in some industry sectors and hope for growth in others. Participation in the new economy is often promoted as a panacea for rural development and employment, offering hope for a transformation of work that would enable people at a distance from urban centres to participate in work electronically and for the revitalization of rural economies. So far, this potential has not been realized in much of rural Nova Scotia.

The research for this project addressed two main questions: How can rural women in Nova Scotia take advantage of new economy opportunities and what kind of policies do rural women need to facilitate their full participation in the new economy?

### **Main Findings**

There is evidence that women in rural communities, despite their tenacity and creativity, face unique challenges and barriers to participation in the new economy. The greatest challenges are found in economic policies that do not pay attention to rural women, in social policies that are inadequate and exclusionary and in the lack of widespread integration of social and economic policies. Rural women are generally invisible in economic policies in Nova Scotia and Canada. In fact, policy makers discount the very notion that gender has anything to do with economic policy. The preference for gender-neutral policies has actually neglected women and worked against women's economic progress. Inclusion will only be a reality if economic and social policies are constructed within a system-wide framework of gender awareness and accountability. Overall system-wide policies and strategies must be implemented to identify places in the inter- and intra-governmental systems where the needs of particular groups of women are not met.

### **Policy Recommendations**

A range of policy reforms must be considered for rural women to participate fully in the new economy. Recommendations are included for federally and provincially mandated gender-based decision making and program accountability in economic and social policy processes, as well as suggestions for particular economic, social and rural policies in the areas of entrepreneurship, women's community economic development, education and training, child care, employment benefits and social assistance.

#### **1. Develop public policies, grounded in the principles of equality, that fully integrate gender-based analysis, planning and decision-making processes.**

Public policies, grounded in the principles of equality, would ensure that women become equal partners and participants in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policy and program development. Policies grounded in the principles of equality would ensure

parallel provision of mainstream and targeted programs. Therefore, we recommend the following policy and program changes.

- Government policies need to reinstate women-specific funding programs to ensure support for training, skills development, and social and economic development initiatives. Effective gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by specific funding programs for women by both federal and provincial governments.
- The Government of Canada needs to ensure that gender analysis is embedded in the policy-making process at the formative stage, at both the planning and decision-making stages, at the interpretation stage, and finally, when programs and strategies are implemented at either the national or regional level. Research and analysis must be ongoing throughout this process to discern, describe and resolve differing gender impacts.
- The Government of Nova Scotia needs to develop a gender equality policy that legislates that gender decision making is embedded in the policy-making process.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia must mandate the collection and use of gender-disaggregated research data throughout the policy-making process. The absence of gender analysis in the policy process can be explained, in part, by the lack of gender-disaggregated statistics. Without statistics, conditions faced by women cannot be documented nor can progress be tracked. Without data, accountability is difficult to mandate and enforce, and it is difficult to undertake effective gender analysis in policy-making processes.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should conduct studies to better profile rural women, making sure to include data on African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.
- Governments should ensure that enforceable gender equity measures (accountability, data collection, monitoring and evaluation methods) are built into their policies and resultant strategies, frameworks and funded programs.
- Governments must implement multi-year stable funding to support women's policy-making communities, to ensure more effective policy consultation mechanisms.

## **2. Develop economic policies that support rural women's full participation in the new economy.**

Economic policies for the new economy need to focus equitably on rural areas. Further, they need to be constructed within a system-wide framework of gender awareness and accountability to ensure that rural women are valued and included. Investing in women's entrepreneurship and women's community economic development means paying attention to issues, such as access to credit, non-standard work arrangements, child-care systems, access to ICT, employment benefits and social safety net programs. To invest in these is tantamount to

investing in women's access to new economy opportunities.

- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should ensure a more equitable distribution of funds so policies and programs that stress innovation, research and development, technology transfer and growth and development equally benefit both rural and urban Canada.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should establish gender equity policies for all publicly funded economic development agencies. These policies must ensure that accountability, gender-disaggregated data collection, monitoring and evaluation methods are built into their funding programs, and enforcement measures are in place to determine the impacts of programs on diverse rural women.
- The Government of Canada should require the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to advocate for the principles of gender equality to ensure parallel provision of mainstream and targeted programs for women, in line with the Agency's legislated mandate to advocate for Atlantic Canada's interests, priorities and concerns in federal government policy making.
- The Government of Canada should fund research to increase the foundation of knowledge and understanding of women entrepreneurs and identify the systemic barriers they face.
- The Government of Canada should analyze the policy implications of the rising number of self-employed women in Canada and their economic contributions and status. Government must recognize the inequities inherent in current systems and seek to develop policies that would enable equity.
- The Government of Canada should ensure that economic programs address the specific issues women entrepreneurs face, such as access to micro-credit, employment benefits and social safety net programs, mentoring and networking opportunities, business skills training, information and government programs, and support for service-sector businesses.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should fully support women-centred community economic development as a viable strategy for rural women to access employment in the new economy by including women-centred community economic development in policies and programs.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should provide comprehensive funding mechanisms that support women-centred community economic development organizations as they build the operational, financial, technical and research capacity to create long-term training and employment opportunities for rural women to participate fully in the new economy.
- The Government of Canada must ensure that increased support for community-based

economic development and the social economy announced in the March 2004 budget is developed through a gender lens, and the resulting programs are constructed within a gender-based framework.

### **3. Develop social policies that build a foundation for inclusion, innovation and equality.**

Social policy that supports women's access to the new economy must address such issues as quality early childhood education and care, income assistance inequities, quality job creation, employment benefits and lifelong learning.

- The Government of Canada must fully implement and fund a universal, high-quality, flexible early childhood education and care system, without which rural women will continue to be excluded from access to education and work in the new economy.
- The Government of Canada should reform eligibility rules under Employment Insurance to include self-employed women and more women in non-standard and part-time work.
- The Government of Canada should reform eligibility criteria under Employment Insurance to include those who are unemployed and outside the system. There is a lack of employment services in rural Nova Scotia that serve women other than those eligible for Employment Insurance.
- Governments should systematically gather gender-disaggregated statistics to permit analysis of the extent to which rural women benefit from current programs, and this information should include breakdowns on African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should reform its social assistance policy to permit more than the current maximum of two-years, full-time post-secondary education for women on social assistance.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should reform its social assistance policy to ensure the implementation of long-term educational and employment strategies for women who need extensive training and transitional labour market programming.
- Governments should restore stable, long-term core funding to rural community learning and women's equality-seeking organizations to ensure the existence of a sustainable infrastructure on which to build community-based programming and policy development.
- Governments should restore multi-year project funding for community-based training and skills development programs in rural communities.
- Governments should provide direct, multi-year funding for local women's organizations to establish bridging programs that provide a wide range of support services, including

skills training, upgrading, counselling, life-skills training, job search techniques, pre-employment programs and basic computer and economic literacy.

- Governments should establish sustainable, long-term funding to support technology access and training programs for women in rural communities. In particular, targeted policies that support women's access to ICTs need to be established. These must include a focus on social facilitation, computer literacy, flexible programming that incorporates women's day-to-day experiences, and low-cost or free access to address the effects of the growing digital divide.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should support initiatives that expand the Nova Scotia Community College's capacity to address gender inequities: establish a gender equity officer positions, and develop a gender equity policy and initiatives that have been identified as helpful to rural women entering trades and technology programs (the provision of part-time programs, campus child care, pre-course math and science upgrading and a computer loan bank).
- Governments should work with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and local chambers of commerce in rural areas, drawing both on the local community college and local women's groups to develop awareness among employers of the value of employing women and of training female employees to facilitate their advancement in new economy jobs.
- Governments should ensure that better and more timely labour market information is available to rural areas through a variety of community-based and government agencies. Enhanced labour market transition services should be established to ensure proper guidance regarding new economy employment opportunities.
- Governments should take advantage of the opportunities presented in partnership agreements to advance a gender equity agenda by requiring partners to build gender equity strategies and outcome measures into agreements, such as those on post-secondary and workplace training.

#### **4. Develop economic and social policies that are inclusive of rural Canada and respectful of the requirements of rural communities.**

Economic and social policies must address the particular needs of rural Canada including, but not limited to, the need to enhance rural infrastructure. Current economic policies directly and indirectly place relatively greater emphasis on urban regions. This exacerbates urban-rural disparities and reinforces processes that lead to further underdevelopment in areas of rural Canada.

- Governments should ensure that a rural lens is used by all government departments when developing economic and social policies.

- Governments should establish accountability measures and monitoring processes to ensure rural areas are adequately considered in both funding allocations and program implementation in new economy initiatives. This includes the need to collect data regarding new economy outcomes in rural areas.
- Governments need to ensure the upkeep and development of rural infrastructure (particularly transportation), to support access to new economy opportunities.
- The Government of Canada needs to realize a comprehensive telecommunications infrastructure for rural Canada.
- Governments must act to ensure rural citizens and businesses have access to ICTs through adequate and appropriate carriage facilities, devices, training, computer technologies and diverse content software.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2002, Status of Women Canada announced a call for proposals under a policy theme, Restructuring in Rural Canada: Policy Implications for Rural Women. The call recognizes that Canada is in a period of economic transition that affects women's livelihoods in rural communities, many of which are in decline. New economy forces of globalization, competition and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are changing the way people do business, and for rural areas this can mean declines in some industry sectors and hope for growth in others. Nova Scotia is a mostly rural province, and people in many rural areas of Nova Scotia face significant structural barriers typical of underdeveloped regions in Eastern Canada: high unemployment, low participation rates, low earnings, low education levels and, hence, high out migration, especially among the youth. Many of these characteristics are more pronounced for women than they are for men. Participation in the new economy is often promoted as a panacea for rural development and employment, offering hope for a transformation of work that would enable people at a distance from urban centres to participate in work electronically and result in a revitalization of rural economies. This report explores barriers to the realization of this potential for women in rural Nova Scotia.

This research project was conducted in Nova Scotia between April 2003 and January 2004. The research addressed two main questions.

- How can rural women in Nova Scotia take advantage of new economy opportunities, particularly those linked to new technologies?
- What kind of policies do rural women in Nova Scotia need to facilitate their full participation in the new economy?

In 1997, the Women's Economic Equality Society (WEE Society 1997) initiated *Counting Women in Community Economic Development*. During that project 1,540 rural Nova Scotia women were invited to discuss their work within their communities and the issues that limit their voices from being heard at decision-making tables. What unfolded was a picture of rural Nova Scotia women who were committed to the growth and sustainable development of their communities so their children and grandchildren could remain and work in Nova Scotia. The project report showed that as the social agenda gradually slipped from government tables, rural women had increased their load — working to establish community day cares, food banks and affordable housing, and assisting in schools strained by budget cutbacks. They had also stepped in to fill many gaps in Nova Scotia's health care system, caring for early release hospital patients, the elderly and those with a disability.

When asked what would enhance their opportunities as they work, volunteer, raise their families and support their neighbours and communities, these women spoke of:

- increased access to information and resources;
- networking opportunities;

- child-care and elder-care supports;
- transportation alternatives;
- funding for community projects and credit for business development;
- training and education programs;
- employment opportunities or improved employment;
- the need for increased awareness of cultural barriers;
- the value placed on women's unpaid work;
- support for volunteers;
- representation on boards and committees;
- improved community partnerships;
- local facilitators to support local development;
- services for youth;
- improved health care;
- ways to address environmental issues; and
- the limitations of short-term project work (WEE Society 1997).

For rural women in Nova Scotia, each of these items compounds with the next. For example, if there is a networking opportunity and a woman has no way to get there and no one to look after her child if she does go, it becomes fairly daunting. Or, if there are few employment opportunities, and a woman has an idea for a small business but cannot access start-up money, it becomes discouraging.

This list of challenges faced by the women involved in the *Counting Women in Community Economic Development* report brings into view the multiplicity of policy areas which impact on women, and suggests the interdependence of social and economic policy. When we developed our initial research proposal for *Public Policy and the Participation of Rural Nova Scotia Women in the New Economy*, it was our intention to undertake a closer analysis of a range of economic, social, rural and educational policies and identify any gaps, exclusions and contradictions that might, in concert, constitute challenges and barriers to rural Nova Scotia women hoping to take advantage of stable jobs in the new economy, particularly women who are poor or who belong to doubly disadvantaged groups: African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.

### **Approach to Policy**

In planning this research, we defined policy broadly to include frameworks, strategies and action plans, as well as those policies embedded in legislation. Some policies at the provincial and federal levels that affect rural women in the new economy, such as Employment Insurance

(EI) or social assistance, are firmly embedded in legislation. Others, such as Canada's Innovations Strategy or the Nova Scotia Skills Framework, are presented as frameworks for action, as evolving strategies or as programs with links to formal policies. Certain key strategy and framework documents seem to drive provincial and federal action plans and, therefore, function as though they are policy. Thus, we cast a broad net in considering policy barriers to the participation of rural women in the new economy.

We also regard public policy to be about both action and inaction. The absence of action is itself a policy decision. Further, we use the term "policy" broadly to include implementation and monitoring as well as policy formulation. "Policy making and implementation are intertwined and inseparable" (Yan 1998: 44). Any effective analysis of rural women and access to jobs in the new economy must recognize the intertwining of policy formulation and implementation. Regardless of how well the policy has been formulated, subsequent implementation and monitoring processes often determine whether the desired results have been achieved. In this research project, we explored processes of monitoring and accountability, recognizing that without monitoring and accountability, it is impossible for government departments to ascertain whether rural women are equally able to benefit from new economy public policy and programs.

The policy context in Canada is made more complex because federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions share responsibility for providing services. There is a complex interplay between the federal and provincial governments through transfer payments, changing jurisdictional contexts, shifting responsibilities from the federal level to the provinces, multi-level governance and joint undertakings. In practice, this often means provincial policies are shaped by federal policies, either because of funding priorities or because areas not addressed federally have to be picked up provincially. Because a large portion of the Nova Scotia provincial budget is based on equalization payments from the federal government, the provincial agenda is driven by what federal funding is available or by gaps that appear as a result of what is not funded federally.

With a neo-liberal government agenda and competition and globalization as formative factors in the new economy, the strategic business model becomes an additional layer crucial to understanding policy development and implementation. Within a business model, policy is driven less by social welfare goals than by the goals of efficiency and economy. This is a context where "equity and distributional objectives are likely to be most at risk in a competitive global environment where jurisdictions are under pressure to compete for business investment and jobs by reducing costly regulations" (Gunderson and Riddell cited in Townson 2003: 9).

Because this is a study of rural women, we spent time considering how rurality is taken up in policy making. Historically, in Canada and Nova Scotia, rurality has been associated with agriculture, and federal rural development policies have been located in departments of agriculture. Programs for agricultural development have been the major driver of rural development policy (Fairburn 1998; Pezzini 2000). However, those who study rural Canada have long argued that rural policies have to move beyond agriculture, and that as part of this,

the differences within rural areas have to be understood. The federal government developed the rural lens in order to have all departments consider the impact of proposed policies on rural areas.

### **Methodology**

The research procedures for this project involved documentary analysis, statistical analysis and interview data analysis.

#### ***Analysis of Documents***

Documentary analysis included a review of pertinent literature and an analysis of key policies. A central premise was that women's access to opportunities in the new economy is affected by policies that intersect across provincial and federal jurisdictions and among departments. This premise means the research cut a broad swath across both literature and policy. Topics explored in the literature review included new economy and globalization, connectivity strategies, rurality and rural underdevelopment, gender and policy making, gender equity machinery, social assistance, employment insurance, training and apprenticeship, economic development in Atlantic Canada, community economic development and social economy. For the most part, we used Canadian studies, although in the analysis of gender equity machinery, we consulted European sources. For the policy analysis we examined key documents from federal departments (including Industry Canada and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Human Resources Development Canada, Status of Women Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) and provincial departments (Office of Economic Development, the Department of Education and Department of Community Services). We also looked at programs, such as regional development authorities (RDAs), community business development corporations (CBDCs) and Smart Communities. As we report on the policy analysis in each chapter, we specify the policies and programs reviewed.

#### ***Statistical Analysis***

Using data from 2001 Census Community Profiles<sup>1</sup> (Statistics Canada) along with data from the Nova Scotia Department of Finance, *Nova Scotia Statistical Review 2002*, we created a profile of rural women in Nova Scotia that includes information about age distribution, migration, diversity, disability, earnings from employment, employment by industry, employment rates, participation rates, and unemployment rates and education levels. Limitations of both time and money, as well as availability of data, precluded extensive statistical analysis; this means we have a limited view of the differences among rural women. Given the difficulties we faced compiling the profile, we recommend further research to better profile rural women, including data on African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.

We have produced a one-time limited portrait of several common indicators, using county-level data to make general rural–urban comparisons. We compare Nova Scotia's largest urban region and metro area (the Halifax Regional Municipality) with the other counties in Nova Scotia (non-metro areas), all of which are considered rural by definition.<sup>2</sup> For evidence of even greater urban–rural differences, we also compared the metro area with Nova Scotia's three most-rural counties: Guysborough, Victoria and Richmond. It is

important to note that these most-rural counties have significantly lower populations than the metro. Despite the advantage of using county data for rural–urban comparison and for identifying the most-rural areas, there are drawbacks to using the relatively large geographical areas encompassed by counties in Nova Scotia to analyze rural conditions, because rural communities usually compete with the urban area within the centre of their sphere (Henry and Drabenstott 1996). A macro (county) analysis can obscure important micro considerations. Thus, we make general statements about trends with degrees of rurality in mind. These trends should be most evident for areas most marginalized by their rurality.

### *Interviews*

We conducted interviews and consultations with two groups of people, using a key informant approach. First we interviewed key individuals from community-based service and advocacy organizations in geographically dispersed rural areas of the province. We sought individuals who were known for their many years of service in rural areas and whose work enabled them to understand what women in rural areas face when seeking employment or when trying to access training to improve their labour market opportunities. We identified key service providers and advocates based on their level of front-line experience, the diversity of women with whom they work, the range of services they offer, the rurality of their jurisdictions, and the key policies that affect women with whom they work. The organizations from which we selected interviewees included women’s centres, regional development agencies, Community Access Program (CAP) site providers and employment resource centres. We also consulted with service providers working with culturally diverse advocacy groups, including immigrant women, women with disabilities, African Nova Scotia women and Francophone women. (See Appendix A for a list of agencies and organizations.) In these consultations, we first ascertained what the role of the organization was and the women served by the organization. We asked about areas of federal and provincial policy that have an impact on the women served by the organization, how the policies support and challenge the women, whether there were any women excluded from the service as a result of the policies, and how they would change the policies. We used the information derived from the service provider consultations to verify that issues documented in the literature did indeed continue to be faced by women in Nova Scotia. We also used the information to clarify how practices and procedures resulting from how policies intersect across federal and provincial jurisdictions and across departments impact on rural women.

Our second interview cluster was with civil servants involved in policy making in Nova Scotia, whether working within the provincial government or within regional offices of federal departments. We selected individuals in senior positions including managers, executive directors, directors and senior policy advisers. The intention was to learn from the insights of those involved in policy development and implementation processes from a range of relevant departments in both federal and provincial jurisdictions (Community Services, Education, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Human Resources Development Canada, Industry Canada and the Office of Economic Development). Based on our initial assessment and compilation of policies relevant to the research questions, we identified the key departments and the individuals from those departments and offices who would be most able to answer policy questions. We used the interviews to probe for gender analysis in

policy making when documents available on-line failed to provide insights into gender analysis in various federal or provincial departments. We used the information from these interviews to clarify our interpretation of policy and to explore the extent to which gender entered into the discourse of the policy makers.

Members of the research team carried out all the interviews, which were taped, transcribed and subsequently analyzed, observing normal ethical procedures regarding anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. Given the agreements on confidentiality, when quoting from our interviews we refer only to “consultations with service providers” or “consultations with policy makers” without any further identifying information.

### ***Limitations***

This research project was a large undertaking. The magnitude of the multiple and overlapping policies along with time limitations, meant we had to narrow our focus. Much is written on women’s access to science and technology careers in the new economy. Government and industry analyses focus on women pursuing science and engineering careers. Many gender equity strategies exist in relation to women in science, engineering and technology both in university programs and subsequent employment in science, research, engineering and technology fields. Federal programs, scholarships and research chairs exist to encourage more women to enter fields of science and engineering, and there are organizations that actively promote women in these areas (e.g., the Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science and Technology and the Federal Women in Science and Technology Working Group). Further, there are programs that encourage high school girls to enter science and technology fields (e.g., Techsploration and the Hypatia Project in Nova Scotia). Much less research, policy and program attention has been paid to rural women in the new economy, particularly where those women are marginalized by poverty. We therefore took this up as our focus, so many of the policy challenges we identify are those more likely faced by this segment of the rural population. Once we completed the profile of rural women in Nova Scotia (see Chapter 3), we decided to focus on policy issues impacting low-income rural women’s access to jobs in the new economy, self-employed rural women (including entrepreneurs) and women-centred community economic development (CED) in rural Nova Scotia, linking women’s employment to community development and sustainability. This research was not intended to provide comparative data on women and men in rural Nova Scotia. Our focus has been to compile and weave together what is known about the situation for women in relation to a broad range of policies and issues.

From the outset, we could see that a challenge was going to be how to demonstrate that issues were particular to rural women. Many of the issues raised in a policy area (e.g., education, social assistance, access to credit or connectivity policies) are experienced by both rural and urban women. What is particular for rural women is the degree to which any factor impacts on them, whether it is patterns of transportation service, geographical disparities in access to training facilities or uneven geographical distribution of new economy jobs. Our report needs to be read through this “degree of impact” lens.

Another issue arises in considering the differences among rural women. Throughout the report we talk about “rural women in Nova Scotia.” At times we speak of rural women in general. Other times, we work with the concept “degrees of rurality” (see Chapter 2),

which allows us to differentiate between those rural areas that have access to many facilities, because of proximity to small towns and those rural areas that are more remote. Rural women are diverse, with a range of characteristics in a range of contexts. In our research, we were challenged by piecemeal rural statistics that made our attempts to quantify these differences difficult. Further, most studies and reports only provided broad depictions of women in rural areas, masking the sometimes widely disparate circumstances faced by rural women. Thus our claims throughout this research report denote broad patterns and challenges that may be more pertinent to some rural women than others. Our goal is to capture the broad patterns and contradictions, not the detailed specificities for particular rural areas.

Linked to this are the limitations arising from the lack of availability of data and analysis on rural women in every area we wished to scrutinize. We often had to use statistics on Nova Scotia women in general, or occasionally, national statistics on women, to identify broad patterns.

It is this complexity — degrees of rurality coupled with multiple and intersecting policies — that makes the full argument developed in this report so rich. One strength of this study is its attention to the intersection and relationships among policies from differing jurisdictions and levels of government. This brings into view the web of barriers faced by women seeking to enter jobs in the new economy.

## **Overview of the Report**

*Chapter 2, Rural Nova Scotia and the New Economy* sketches characteristics of rural Nova Scotia, describing briefly the historical and contemporary policies that have undermined rural development. Nova Scotia is a mostly rural province, and like much of rural Canada, has experienced a long history of declining infrastructures leading to underdevelopment. The chapter explores the dimensions of the new economy in the context of employment in rural Nova Scotia, showing both its modest medium-intensive character and an infrastructure that fails to support the full participation of many rural Nova Scotians in new economy jobs.

*Chapter 3, Rural Women and the New Economy* provides a profile of women in various areas in Nova Scotia, including metro, non-metro and most-rural areas. The analysis shows that rural women are diverse — some with access to higher education jobs in the knowledge-based economy, training, advancement — while many others are in positions disadvantaged by poverty, lack of access to training and employment in low-paying, often part-time, seasonal jobs. African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women are additionally disadvantaged in all these processes. With this chapter, we begin to identify structural issues facing rural women who seek employment in the new economy: job availability, lack of prior work experience in new economy jobs, hiring practices that create barriers to immigrant and racially visible women, transportation barriers and limited access to computers that is exacerbated by the lack of an ongoing rural public training infrastructure in all levels of ICT

use. We also identify issues faced by women seeking entry into the new economy through self-employment: access to credit, start-up and long-term business counselling, support networks for women in small business and access to information about small business development.

A central theme that emerges is that social policy must be considered when analyzing economic policy issues related to jobs in the new economy. The issues are not only ones of economic development but of social development.

In **Chapter 4, *Social Infrastructure and Rural Women***, we describe the federal government's restructuring of its social and income-support policies as part of its effort, over the last decade, to position Canada in the global economy. In addition to the restructuring, the federal government has not fully implemented its promised national child-care strategy, an infrastructure central to women's participation in paid work. Systemic exclusions become very clear. We highlight four areas of the social and income support infrastructure that impacted negatively

on rural communities and affect the capacity of rural women to access jobs in the new economy:

the failure to implement fully a national child-care system, the exclusion of many women from entitlement to federal employment and training benefits (EI legislation), the limitations of provincial income support benefits (provincial social assistance legislation) and the erosion of public funding for the not-for-profit and voluntary sectors. We conclude the chapter by showing that action and inaction in these policy areas affect women along a continuum, from women on social assistance and those who are unemployed, to women on low incomes as well as women who work part time or are self-employed or engaged in other forms of non-standard work.

**Chapter 5, *Rural Women and Economic Policies*** examines federal and provincial economic policies and considers the extent to which they are inclusive of rural women. Policies and programs examined include Canada's Innovation Strategy (including Knowledge Matters and Achieving Excellence), the Smart Communities Program, Atlantic Innovation Partnership, community business development corporations and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency's (ACOA's) Women in Business Initiative. Also included were Nova Scotia's Innovative Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Business Inc. and Opportunities for Prosperity, and

we looked at accountability measures such as the *Federal Employment Equity Act*, the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and the Federal Contractors Program (FCP). We describe the federal and Nova Scotia economic policies for the new economy that primarily support the development and growth of high-knowledge intensive enterprises in urban areas. Strategies and accountability frameworks stress innovation, research and development, and technology transfer — activities connected with large urban areas and a few towns. Rural policies focus on connectivity, provide some support for rural small businesses and support rural CED through the RDAs.

**Chapter 6, *Education and Training*** argues that while training is generally accepted as



essential for developing skilled workers who can adapt easily to new technologies and changing job requirements, government actions have eroded opportunities for lifelong education in rural areas. We examine the effectiveness of a range of education and training policies and opportunities for women in rural Nova Scotia: adult upgrading and bridging programs for women, on-the-job-training, publicly funded training through EI and the community college system. Education and training initiatives must be accompanied by effective rural economic and social development policies that recognize both the range of ruralities and the strength of rural capacities.

***Chapter 7, An Inclusive Approach to Economic Development*** explores the kinds of economic development programs that can arise from an inclusive economic policy. We explore literature on the major strategies which we feel would enable the participation of rural women in Nova Scotia, particularly those marginalized by their rurality and by low income, showing the effectiveness of policies where social and economic development are fundamentally entwined. We describe women-centred CED, an inclusive developmental process that recognizes the systemic gender barriers women face daily and creates opportunities with a long-term lens and an empowering focus. It offers a holistic approach to economic development that values women's contributions in the home, in the community, in business and in the new economy workplace. The chapter identifies key strategies that would support women-centred CED in rural areas.

***Chapter 8, Policy-Making and Gender Equity Mechanisms*** explores the paradox that has found the Canadian government establishing its Plan for Gender Equity in 1995 alongside a decade of restructuring that has had a negative impact on many women, particularly those marginalized by poverty. In this chapter we critique the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming and gender-based analysis (GBA) as tools for ensuring gender equity analysis in federal policy making.

The final section of the report is ***Chapter 9, Conclusions and Recommendations***.

## 2. RURAL NOVA SCOTIA AND THE NEW ECONOMY

What are the characteristics of rural Nova Scotia, and how is it situated in the new economy? In this study, we use the term “rural” to describe areas located away from a major urban centre, having a relatively small population and low population density. These two obvious features of rurality — remoteness and small scale — tend to inhibit economic growth in rural areas (Henry and Drabenstott 1996). Nonetheless, degrees of rurality exist, because of such factors as proximity to an urban or small town centre, population density, percentage of the work force in the primary sector and the degree of rurality of the surrounding area (Ashton et al. 1994).

The Northwest Territories, Yukon and Prince Edward Island are Canada’s most rural areas, followed by New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (Bollman 2001: 6). The Canadian Rural Partnership (2002: 1) reported that 30.4 percent of Canadians (more than nine million people) lived in predominately rural regions in 2001. Thus, rural areas matter because of the sheer number of people who choose to live there and because of the inter-relationship of rural and urban systems for labour and resources. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1996: 9) rural matters because, “for most countries, rural areas represent a large share of the national economy and hence economically viable and environmentally healthy rural areas are an indispensable component of balanced national development.” In Nova Scotia, for example, 70 percent of the province’s exports are generated by largely rural, coastal-based industries (CCN 2004: 21).

Depending on how rural is defined (see endnote 2, Chapter 1), estimates of Nova Scotia’s rural population vary, and range up to between 60 and 75 percent. The largest urban population is found within the Halifax Regional Municipality, the capital and only census metropolitan area (CMA).<sup>1</sup> The Cape Breton Regional Municipality — Sydney and a number of small towns and adjacent rural areas — is the second-largest centre in the province, although not large enough to be considered a CMA. The rest of the province is made up of a number of small towns and rural areas within 16 counties. Three of these counties, Guysborough, Richmond and Victoria, are considered 100 percent rural according to the OECD definition and represent Nova Scotia’s most-rural areas.<sup>2</sup> Nova Scotia, then, is a mostly rural province, in a mostly rural, often termed marginalized region of Canada.

People of at least 58 different ethnic backgrounds inhabit the province, with the majority of the population consisting of Anglophones descended from the British Isles. Minority populations include Francophones (4 percent), African Nova Scotians (2 percent), First Nations (2.5 percent), and other visible minorities (3.8 percent). About 30 percent of the Francophone population is concentrated in Metro Halifax with smaller communities of majority Acadian descent scattered throughout the rural and small town areas of the province. There are 48 African Nova Scotia communities across the province. In seven of the rural counties, the Black population is the largest visible minority group. In 2001, there were 12,261 Registered Indians in Nova Scotia, 3,960 living off reserve (Rural Communities Impacting Policy 2003: 12-16). Unlike the rest of the country, the majority of Nova Scotia’s

First Nations communities are in rural areas.

Employment by industrial sector in rural and urban Nova Scotia mirrors current trends in the rest of Canada. Rural Nova Scotia is more heavily dependent on resource and manufacturing than urban areas, which rely more heavily on commercial activity (Rural Communities Impacting Policy 2003: 24).

Labour force participation rates in Atlantic Canada have grown rapidly in the recent period, mirroring the national average, albeit several percentage points behind. In Nova Scotia, labour force participation is highest in the Metro Halifax region — 69 percent in August 2003 (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council 2003: 1-2). The 1996 Census data show unemployment rates ranging from a low of 8.6 percent in the Metro Halifax region, to highs of between 19 and 21 percent in the most-rural counties and the Cape Breton Regional Municipality. Education levels in rural Nova Scotia are lower than for urban areas (Rural Communities Impacting Policy 2003).

Per capita income is lower in Nova Scotia than in the rest of Canada (Singh 2002). Nova Scotia has the third highest rate of child poverty in the country at 19.2 percent (Raven and Frank 2003:4). The rural-urban income disparity is highest in Manitoba and Nova Scotia, although in the 1985-1990 period, the Maritime provinces had higher per capita rural income growth than any other provinces in Canada (Singh 2002: 1-7).

“Many of the economic issues facing rural communities are common throughout rural Canada, but are exacerbated in Nova Scotia by its relatively weak economic performance in relation to the Canadian average” (Rural Communities Impacting Policy 2003: 21). In Appendix B, we provide a more detailed analysis of these economic issues, including information on the labour force, income, migration, occupation and education characteristics of rural areas in Canada.

Economic characteristics of rural areas are not straightforward. With lower relative costs of living and lower taxes, low incomes in rural areas may not translate into the degree of hardship the statistics imply (Rupnik et al. 2001: 19-21). Economic disparities between rural and urban areas also mask the less quantifiable but equally important strengths of rural areas. In Atlantic Canada generally, for example, Donald Savoie pointed out that “community life...is richer than modern statistical analysis, based on notions of economic well-being, suggest” (Savoie, cited in Conrad and Hillier 2001: 7).

It is also important to note that all rural regions are not necessarily lagging regions. In keeping with our definition that rurality is a concept of degree, disparities become greater the more an area is marginalized by its rurality. Many rural areas are able to overcome the challenges set by remoteness and scale to become leading regions. “Rurality in itself is not a handicap. It is not synonymous with decline, as much as urbanity and agglomeration are not automatic guarantees for prosperous development” (OECD 1996b: 53). This appears to be true of rural Nova Scotia, where, according to Hachey’s analysis (2002: 9-10), there are two distinct realities — one where communities are thriving and one where they are in decline — and the declining communities are not necessarily rural. The rural counties in Nova Scotia

that experience growth tend also to have urban proximity, post-secondary institutions, tourism, as well as strong manufacturing, services or government sectors.

### **A History of Rural Underdevelopment**

The economic history of the postwar period may help to place the source of some of the development and relative decline of rural Canada, and rural Nova Scotia beyond the borders of Metro Halifax, and Atlantic Canada generally. Fairburn (1998) pointed out that rural Canada in this period was most affected by three key themes: structural changes in the economy, urbanization and the rise and fall of Keynesianism and the welfare state.

Structural changes to the economy early in this period include the decline of resource industries, the shift to extractive industries and the subsidization of the manufacturing sector outside of Atlantic Canada.

Urbanization took place throughout Canadian history, but was a powerful social force in the postwar period, further marginalizing rural residents, decreasing rural populations and shifting the balance of power from rural to urban and small town areas. Equally important was the expansion of the government sector in the postwar period, with employment based mostly in cities. In Nova Scotia, this meant the majority of government sector jobs went to Halifax. “The relation of rural areas to the growth of government has been every bit as problematic as the relation of rural areas to industry, cities and global markets” (Fairburn 1998: 4). The expanding role of government included government intervention with the goal of full employment and social welfare. Economic policy included attempts to equalize market forces, create Crown corporations and diversify the economy through manufacturing and foreign investment (usually in urban areas). According to Fairburn (1998: 12), economic and social policy also became increasingly differentiated; economic policies were to encourage productivity and growth, and social policies/transfers were to equalize the benefits of uneven growth and compensate for regional and social disparities. “For forty years, policy in essence never escaped this dualism — programs were either economic or social, productive or compensatory, with no middle ground” (Fairburn 1998: 12). As well, “there were many programs, many acronyms, large amounts of money, but little development, and even, over time, rather little genuinely rural content” (Fairburn 1998: 5).

In Atlantic Canada, as across North America, this postwar period also bore witness to dramatic changes in the status of women. This included increases in the number of women in the paid labour force, as well as women’s increased enrolment in universities. Aboriginal women gained the right to be elected to band councils; women were allowed civil service jobs and began their foray into politics. This period also saw the establishment of offices, such as Status of Women Canada, and the various provincial advisory councils on the status of women, as well as the emergence of women’s centres, shelters and changes to marital laws (Conrad and Hillier 2001: 205-206).

Regional inequalities were exacerbated with the recessions of the 1970s and ‘80s. Most recently, the rise of neo-liberalism and globalization has led to massive restructuring associated with the new economy. Restructuring by the federal government has focussed on

the central role of the market, deficit reduction, cuts to social services, and massive deregulation and privatization of many services and much infrastructure. In rural areas, these changes have been devastating. In our consultations, one person commented:

*It's this cumulative impact — over time — the rural communities are losing wharves, they're losing their schools, they're losing their hospitals, their post offices and their bank branches and you know, it's death by a thousand cuts.*

In this same period, the decline of the fish stocks continued with increasing fish plant closures. The early 1990s saw the virtual closure of the groundfish fishery, the largest industrial layoff in Canadian history. The impact of this layoff was felt hardest in the east coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, followed by the lower North Shore of Quebec, Cape Breton and Northeastern New Brunswick (Myatt et al. 1995: 32). It caused drastic reductions in employment within the sector. The groundfish fishery had required the use of smaller, more labour intensive gathering methods, and resulted in more on-shore processing (Myatt et al. 1995: 33). Thus, this crisis affected rural areas of coastal Nova Scotia generally, and had specific effects on rural women, both directly due to the loss of family income from fishing, and because women made up the majority of fish plant employees (MacDonald 1994; Pahlke et al. 2001). Rural areas were also affected by the rise of agribusiness and the decline of the small family farm.

Added to the fishery decline and the decline of the family farm, the 1980 to mid-1990 period saw the continuous and significant decline in the amount of federal government funding to individuals, firms and governments in Atlantic Canada. With reductions in regional development subsidies, restrictions in the growth of transfer payments and massive cutbacks in current expenditures, the federal government presence in the Atlantic Provinces decreased at a much faster pace than elsewhere in Canada. Spending cuts were combined with federal tax increases. The government also eliminated direct subsidies to Atlantic businesses and cut other subsidy programs like the Maritime Freight Rate Assistance, Atlantic Freight Rate Assistance and the Feed Freight Assistance programs (Atlantic Provinces Economic Council 1996).

Massive restructuring also occurred in social security programming when in 1996 the Canada Assistance Plan was dismantled and replaced by the Canada Health and Social Transfer through which funds for post-secondary education, health care and social assistance were combined and cut. At the same time, the entire federal unemployment insurance program was restructured. This federal restructuring led to the restructuring of social assistance at the provincial level. In Chapter 4, we look more closely at the negative consequences for rural women of these changes in social policies.

The not-for-profit sector is central to rural well-being. It too experienced cuts. The cuts eroded the capacity of voluntary and non-profit rural community organizations, many of which had supported women in crisis and provided employability, skills and literacy programs (see Chapter 4).

Closures, cutbacks and downsizing, and the resultant loss of jobs have a greater impact on

rural areas than urban areas, because of the already limited infrastructure and opportunities. Out migration from job losses can be devastating, damaging social capital, the civic society and voluntary organizations that are crucial to defining the essence of community. In one consultation, we were told about the consequences of the loss of civil service jobs in one rural community.

*These are the Guide leaders and the hockey coaches and the people that make a community go — and phwittt — out they went.*

People in many rural areas face significant structural barriers to employment, high unemployment, low participation rates, low earnings, low education levels and, hence, high out migration, especially among the youth. As we see in the next chapter, many of these characteristics are more pronounced for women than they are for men. The factors are also interrelated. Facing high local unemployment and few job opportunities, rural youth and people of working age leave for higher education or to take advantage of work elsewhere, leaving the rural areas with a higher percentage of seniors and those who are unable or unwilling to leave, sometimes due to family responsibilities or lack of education. There is an increasing societal gap between highly skilled people with high levels of formal education readily participating in the well-paying jobs in the new economy and those relegated to low-paying, low-skilled, marginalized jobs.

Historically, rurality has been associated with agriculture, and federal rural development policies have been located in government agriculture departments. Programs for agricultural development largely became the driver of rural development policy (Fairburn 1998; Pezzini 2000). However, those who study rural Canada have long argued that rural policies have to move beyond agriculture, and that as part of this, the differences within rural areas have to be understood.

The federal government developed the rural lens to have all departments consider the impact on rural areas of proposed policies (Agriculture and Agri-Food 2001a: 4). It is a 10-stage process through which policy developers are supposed to test a proposed initiative; however, research suggests that “while there is a tool in place to ‘rural proof’...policies, the majority of stakeholders [in Nova Scotia] (including government officials) were unaware of its existence.” Furthermore, “the lens is not utilized in any formal way at the provincial or local level” (Hachey 2002: 31). In the course of the research for this report, we saw many instances where federal and provincial policies seem to have failed to consider rural conditions.

Policies must be developed to meet the needs of people living in rural Nova Scotia and to attempt to reverse some of the long-standing under-development trends in an effort to allow people to choose to live and work in rural areas.

What is most important to recognize is that regional disparity in rural Nova Scotia, and in the Maritimes generally, that has evolved over time, has not developed from some deficiency in the people or the place. It has been aided and abetted by policy. As we argue in Chapter 7, for rural communities in Nova Scotia, development is not about jobs and income. It is a process of working with local residents within local communities in an inclusive,

respectful, sustainable and holistic manner. It requires care and attention to all the pieces of the development puzzle: good quality and appropriate lifelong education and training, good health, infrastructure, services and supports to families, valuing the work of women, the availability of quality child care, a participatory and civic society with inclusive institutions and good governance, attention to the environment, good jobs and income in a strong local economy, and a vibrant business sector. Successful development policy and, hence, the lessening of regional disparity occurs when policy considers and includes people and communities, uses a true bottom-up approach, allows resources including capital to be controlled by the people, includes those most vulnerable or most affected, and integrates, in the long run, economic and social factors to achieve holistic ends. Equity must be achieved at each level of the process: locally, provincially and federally.

Our study of rural women and the new economy is situated within both this history of rural underdevelopment and this vision of a model for social and economic development that might lead to healthy sustainable communities in rural Nova Scotia, where women might find more possibility for good incomes and steady jobs. We return to an economic development process that embodies this vision in Chapter 7.

### **Thinking About the New Economy**

The rapid growth in ICTs,<sup>3</sup> economic growth and development for regions and countries around the world and globalization and the potential for productivity gains characterize the new economy. According to Stiroh (2002: 1), the concept of new economy includes the “recent productivity, inflation and unemployment gains resulting from three New Economy forces — technology, globalization and increased competitive pressures.” A number of related terms describe the forces of globalization, competition and use of ICTs, and the effect of these on the economy and society. These terms include the new economy, the knowledge-based economy, the knowledge economy, knowledge-based economy and society, the information economy and the information society.<sup>4</sup> In this study, we primarily use the terms knowledge-based economy and new economy.

According to the OECD, national economies are in transition to a knowledge-based economy. This is an economy based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information (OECD 1996a). In a knowledge-based economy, knowledge becomes an increasingly important tool for innovation, competition and economic success, and is a key driver of economic growth. In a true knowledge-based economy, all sectors are knowledge intensive, not just computer or high technology sectors. In the current project, we avoided a narrow view of labour requirements (science, engineering and computer technologies) and emphasized the broad range of possibilities of jobs in the new economy.

What elements are needed to foster growth in the knowledge-based economy? According to McKeon and Weir (2001), four key dimensions<sup>5</sup> need to be in place and functioning well:

- innovation and technical changes across all sectors and arenas;
- human resource development, with high levels of education and training and

opportunities for lifelong learning;

- an efficient infrastructure, especially in ICTs to allow people and firms to access information; and
- a business environment that supports innovation and enterprise development.

In subsequent sections of this report, we examine aspects of these driving forces in relation to rural Nova Scotia and, in particular, to women living in rural areas.

Critics of the new economy point to the fact that its fundamental elements, especially globalization, seem to require economic and social structures and practices that are detrimental to those who are the poorest. The Canadian Labour Congress, in a recent report called *Women's Work: Challenging and Changing the World* (Wiggins 2003: 17-18), characterized the four basic assumptions that form the foundation of the global economy.

- Barriers to economic growth, access to markets and thus, to profits, must be torn down, even if they have positive objectives, such as a healthy environment, safe food, the protection of jobs, access to water, human rights or public health care.
- Government laws which stand in the way of this or which decrease profit margins must be eliminated.
- Intellectual property rights for corporations must be given protection through patent laws.
- Every economic activity must be turned into a commodity for sale in the market, including public goods, such as health, education and child care.

Some social analysts argue that these global economic practices increase economic disparities and social inequalities. They are practices that produce structural adjustments that have been detrimental to women, particularly those women disadvantaged by poverty, disability, race or ethnicity. Others, like Jackson (2000), argue that it is possible to use new economy technologies and enter into the global marketplace without the restructuring practices described by Wiggins. Canadian government policies, however, mirror more closely the assumptions outlined by Wiggins.

The restructuring of social and economic programs has been part of the federal government's strategy to strengthen Canada's position in the new economy. The challenge for our project is that we are investigating rural women's access to jobs in the new economy at the same time as we are witnessing the negative impact many structures underpinning the new economy are having on those who are poor, many of whom are rural women. This is one key contradiction in considering women in a knowledge-based economy and one with which policy makers struggle. It is for this reason that we take the stand throughout this report and its recommendations that



social and economic policies must be intertwined, and that economic development initiatives must be assessed in terms of their impact on diverse populations.

### ***The Range of Jobs in the New Economy***

It is not helpful, when considering policy challenges to rural women's access to jobs in the new economy, to take a narrow view of labour requirements (science, engineering and computer technologies). Instead, we emphasize a broad range of possibilities. There exists "a much too limited concept of the knowledge economy, which suggests that the only labour requirements for this New Economy are in science and engineering, and particularly in areas such as computer technology and biotechnologies" (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 97-98).<sup>6</sup> They suggested that industries and enterprises can be categorized into high-knowledge intensive industries, medium-knowledge intensive and low-knowledge intensive. High-knowledge intensive industries are "those related to innovation and new technologies, namely bioindustries, information and communication technologies, corporate services, aerospace etc." (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 74). Medium-knowledge intensive industries "generally correspond to large-scale producers and fully mature sectors (e.g. the production of automobiles, primary metals, food, electrical products etc.)" (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 74). Low-knowledge intensive industries include "high labour-intensive activities such as the fisheries, the wood industry, retail trade, transportation and storage, lodging and food services" (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 74).<sup>7</sup>

Beaudin and Breau's second method of categorization is occupational — the kinds of jobs people do rather than the type of industry within which they work. Within this skills typology, the labour force is divided into six categories: knowledge jobs, management jobs, data processing jobs, service delivery jobs, goods manufacturing jobs and data services jobs.<sup>8</sup> These two frameworks provide a way of thinking about the range of jobs in the new economy for rural areas.

### ***Atlantic Canada in the Knowledge-Based Economy***

Nova Scotia is making strides to improve its capacity to participate in the new economy, particularly in its investments in research and development, innovation and infrastructure. Nova Scotia ranks third among provinces in terms of spending on research and development, mostly due to the higher education sector. University enrolment is much higher in Nova Scotia than the national average (44 percent versus 29 percent for Canada). Innovation rates (as measured by the introduction of major new or improved goods or services) for firms with four or fewer employees are higher in the Atlantic Provinces than nationally. As a percentage of provincial gross domestic product (GDP), investment in new computer systems, computer-assisted or controlled technology and other major equipment has almost doubled in Nova Scotia since 1992 (NovaKnowledge 2002). In job creation, between 1992 and 2002, the provincial economy lost 25,000 jobs for workers with less than a high school education and gained 77,900 jobs for workers with at least some post-secondary education (NovaKnowledge 2002: 4). But the face of this development is primarily urban, with some new economy enterprises also developing near small towns located near universities.

In the period ending in 1996, Atlantic Canada's labour force was characterized by jobs where 8.7 percent of people were employed in industries categorized as high-knowledge intensive (53,000 jobs), 39.2 percent in industries and enterprises categorized as medium-knowledge intensive (239,700 jobs) and 52.1 percent in low-knowledge intensive enterprises or industries (318,200 jobs) (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 74). Thus, approximately half of Atlantic Canada's labour force was working in enterprises that were knowledge intensive, although only a small proportion of these workers were in high-knowledge intensive industries.<sup>9</sup> Beaudin and Breau pointed out that in tracking changes between 1991 and 1996, there has been a growth in the percentage of employment in high-knowledge intensive industries, a loss in medium and stagnation in low knowledge-intensive industries.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Rural Nova Scotia and the New Economy***

Within this overall Atlantic Canada perspective, what opportunities for new economy enterprises and employment exist in the rural areas? A rural–urban analysis reveals the extent to which rural areas are excluded from some of the advances in relation to the new economy. In terms of type of employment, the largest gap between urban and rural areas is in business and professional services, the fastest growing sector in the new economy. Although metro and non-metro areas are becoming more knowledge intensive, non-metro areas have fewer workers in knowledge-based jobs and management, even after adjusting for age, education and employment (Letourneau and McDermott 2001). The out migration of young people and the well-educated makes growth more difficult, as does a resource-based economy. People leave peripheral communities because of a lack of educational and career opportunities, reducing the work force available (Polese and Shearmur 2002).

In the Atlantic region, there is a wide gap in computer use between metro and non-metro regions (Letourneau and McDermott 2001). This is true for both individual and business use. A report from a survey of 426 rural small and medium enterprises in Nova Scotia indicated that 30 percent do not use computers for either e-mail or the Internet, in contrast to 22 percent for urban small businesses (Harley 2001).

Employment in call centres seems to be one provincial strategy for drawing rural Nova Scotia into the new economy.<sup>11</sup> Call centre employment accounts for about 3.3 percent of total employment in the province and is comparable to total employment in the forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas sectors combined (totalling 13,400 people). Most call centre employees are female. Workplace issues associated with call centres are common ones in the new economy regarding the quality and type of work. Much, although not all, call centre work is still about processing tasks versus thinking, creating and controlling information. Workers have less autonomy and more supervision. This creates stress and, with poor wages, the work is undervalued (Putnam et al. 2000).

Beaudin and Breau (2001) asked whether it is possible to speak of a knowledge economy in relation to rural Atlantic Canada. In high knowledge-intensive jobs, there is a large rural–urban gap (with urban almost twice as large: 11.1 percent to 5.5 percent), likely due to the fact that many high knowledge-intensive industries are located in the metro Halifax area, close to major research centres and universities. “Two parallel economies seem to be at

work, each one in possession of half the regional workforce” (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 84). “Knowledge economy remains an essentially urban phenomenon... In Atlantic Canada, three out of four jobs in high-knowledge-intensive industries are found in urban areas. In fact it seems that the rural–urban split in knowledge activities has intensified between 1991 and 1996” (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 82).

In medium-knowledge intensive jobs there is less of a gap (only three percent in favour of urban areas). In rural Nova Scotia, where small businesses predominate, knowledge-based industries tend to be medium intensity.<sup>12</sup>

Beaudin and Breau (2001: 89) agreed that there are possibilities for a modest knowledge-based economy in rural areas, but that it is likely to concentrate in the medium-knowledge intensive jobs. Further, resource-based economies need to consider innovation in the context of globalization — new markets, more efficient and modernized production (just-in-time), responses to tightened environmental legislation, developing market niches, forming strategic alliances — all conditions created by the new economy. New technologies are being assimilated by traditional sectors.

Well-located small rural communities of less than 10,000 people can grow in the knowledge-based economy (Polese and Shearmur 2002), but for rural Nova Scotia in general, the lack of rural infrastructure and capacity in rural areas, developed through years of neglect, cuts and misguided development policy, is significant.

The dilemma, of course, is that while much of the new employment opportunities being created are in developed economies...the circumstance is that most rural and remote communities do not have the pre-conditions — the knowledge base, the skills and human capital, the financial environment or the capacity for research and development from which most New Economy enterprises occur (Gurstein 2003: 7).

### ***Rural Exchange Systems***

According to Industry Canada, one of the six core elements needed for growth in the knowledge-based economy is “exchange networks,” which includes transportation systems and telecommunications infrastructure to move ideas, services, information, people and products (Industry Canada 2000).

Transportation has long been seen as a significant barrier to rural economic development in both the old and new economies. Major sections of rural Nova Scotia are not yet serviced by decent highways, rail systems have been discontinued in most rural areas, bus service is sporadic, and courier services are not readily available. This barrier can be exacerbated by stiffer competitive forces in the global marketplace. While it is true that small rural communities can grow in the knowledge-based economy, their distance from markets adds additional time and cost to products and services competing with urban economies. Although the new economy technologies offer rural communities a chance to transmit information, there are no reductions in the cost of transmitting goods, and this additional cost becomes a handicap. Geography and low population densities compound the problems posed by distance

(Polese and Shearmur 2002).

Telecommunications infrastructure is a second key component of exchange networks, and is crucial for participation in the new economy. The telecommunications infrastructure required for universal access is outlined as a series of steps in Clement and Shade's model (1998)

of the access rainbow, and includes the need for carriage facilities, devices, software tools, content services, service providers, literacy and social facilitation and governance. Clement and Shade argued that failure to navigate any one layer of the rainbow blocks the ability of people to participate fully in the new economy.

Many rural communities struggle with the inability to obtain even minimal essential bandwidth and access to high speed Internet. This carriage facility component is at the lowest level of the access rainbow and is the foundation of telecommunications infrastructure. Yet, it is still a barrier and challenge for rural Canada. Connecting rural Canadians to the knowledge-based economy and society, and helping them acquire the skills to use the technology is the sixth of eleven priority areas identified by the Canadian Rural Partnership. At the 2002 National Rural Conference in Charlottetown, rural access to broadband was identified as a key issue. One recommendation identified in the resulting Charlottetown Action Plan (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2002a) is for the Canadian Rural Partnership to "continue to work with Industry Canada and other federal departments and provincial/territorial government to ensure that broadband access is available to all rural communities by 2005."

In considering access to devices and software, studies show that, over time, income continues to be the most important factor determining the likelihood of access, because of personal connectivity and equipment costs (computers, computer software, Internet and e-mail services) (Reddick et al. 2000, 2001, 2002). Rural areas have lower levels of access than urban areas. The Maritimes, Quebec and Saskatchewan have lower levels of access than do other Canadian provinces. The barriers and obstacles to access are greater for people in lower socio-economic groups, who have fewer skills and resources to overcome them (Reddick et al. 2001).

Service providers (groups offering network access to ICT users, such as workplaces, libraries and Internet service providers) and literacy and social facilitation (the skills and training needed to fully use ICTs) are two additional key elements. Many rural areas rely on the government's connectedness strategy for public access computer sites, funded by Industry Canada through the large CAP and the more modest Community Learning Networks (CLN); CAP, especially, has been an important source of funding that allows many rural communities to access computers and Internet technology. At the end of 2002-2003, there were more than seven thousand CAP sites in Canada, the majority rural.

Nonetheless, according to Rideout (2000), there needs to be an analysis at the community level to see if these connectedness policies are bridging or aggravating the digital divide, given that even the level of skill required to complete the application process is a barrier for many communities. Existing funding is patchwork at best, and sustainability is a major

issue. We heard this in several of our consultations.

*The CAP sites are not well known or used. The hours they're open are inconsistent, and there are few guides available. Their level of education is a barrier to women's access to technology training.*

Rideout (2003) proposed that the phrase “digital divide” (the gap between those with access to ICTs and those who do not) be changed to digital inequality to link the gap between uneven regional development with the gap between users and non-users of ICTs. Temporary programs, like CAP and CLN are described by Rideout as a band-aid solution for Atlantic Canadians to take part in the information society, but they do little to address systemic regional development issues (Rideout 2003: 5). As well, these policies leave volunteer groups working to obtain and manage a fundamental component of access to the new economy.<sup>13</sup>

Overall then, in considering exchange systems as preconditions for new economy enterprises, it is clear that if rural areas are to be included in the new economy, attention must be paid to exchange networks: transportation and telecommunications infrastructure, and community-based facilitation provisions. To not do so provides urban areas with an increasing advantage.

### **Key Summary Points**

- Nova Scotia is a mostly rural province, in a mostly rural region of Canada. Rural Nova Scotia, like much of rural Canada, has experienced a long history of declining infrastructures leading to underdevelopment.
- People living in rural areas experience higher levels of unemployment, lower average incomes, lower levels of education and higher levels of out migration.
- Degrees of rurality exist. The rural counties in Nova Scotia that experience growth tend to have urban proximity, post-secondary institutions, tourism, as well as strong manufacturing, services or government sectors.
- Different levels of knowledge intensiveness are associated with particular occupations, and a wide range of jobs are associated with the knowledge-based economy, a fact often not recognized in contemporary discourse on the new economy.
- There are greater new economy employment possibilities in urban centres in Nova Scotia; new economy opportunities in rural areas are in medium-knowledge-intensive enterprises and in resource industries as they adjust to globalization practices.
- Many rural communities in Nova Scotia do not have the exchange system infrastructure to support new economy enterprises (transportation for goods and services, carriage facilities, broadband) and have often inadequate services for ICT literacy and facilitation.

- Many global economic strategies taken to be foundational to the current new economy have been ones that produce structural adjustments detrimental to women, particularly those women disadvantaged by poverty, disability, race or ethnicity.

Social and economic development must proceed hand in hand. We argue that for rural women to take advantage of economic opportunities in the new economy, social policy initiatives must be carefully linked with economic ones over the long term as part of a full community economic development strategy.

### 3. RURAL WOMEN AND THE NEW ECONOMY

Women in rural Nova Scotia are a diverse and dynamic group, living and working within the context of rural underdevelopment in ways that are creative and tenacious. This chapter sketches a profile of rural women, providing a glimpse of the range of women's experiences in rural Nova Scotia and bringing into view the life conditions faced by women most marginalized by poverty and rural disparity. The latter section of the chapter begins the exploration of some of the issues and opportunities for rural women's employment in new economy jobs. Sources for the analysis include statistical data, literature and consultations with service providers and policy makers.

#### **A Profile of Women in Rural Nova Scotia**

Our profile of rural women in Nova Scotia includes data about age distribution, migration, diversity, disability, earnings from employment, employment by industry, employment rates, participation rates and unemployment rates, and education levels. For a tabular presentation of these data and data sources, see Appendix C.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive statistical analysis of rural women in Nova Scotia, but a one-time glimpse of several common indicators to paint a limited picture. We used census data for portions of our profile, which is point in time and thus subject to limitations. We have not looked at trends over time nor included one-time events in the geographic areas chosen that may have affected the data. We have used county-level data to try and make general rural–urban comparisons. However, there are also limitations to using relatively large areas like counties

to analyze rural conditions, because, as pointed out by Henry and Drabenstott (1996), rural communities usually compete with the urban area within the centre of their sphere. Taking a macro view (i.e., by county) can overlook important micro considerations. We compare Nova Scotia's metro region (Halifax Regional Municipality), with the non-metro areas. For evidence of even greater urban–rural differences, we also included data from Nova Scotia's three completely rural counties: Guysborough, Victoria and Richmond. It is important to note that these most-rural counties have significantly lower populations than the metro area. Given that there are degrees of rurality, we make general statements about trends with degrees of rurality in mind; these trends should be most evident for areas most marginalized by their rurality.

#### ***Age***

In 2001, rural Nova Scotia tended to have a greater percentage of older women (55 and over) than urban Nova Scotia. This difference was even more pronounced for senior women (65 and over). Rural areas tended to have fewer women in the 25 to 44 age group compared with the metro area (see Table C-1).

#### ***Out Migration***<sup>1</sup>

Nova Scotia women are moving into and out of all Nova Scotia counties. In rural areas, young women and women of working age (25 to 44) have the highest net out-migration rates. Men and women appear to leave rural Nova Scotia at a similar rate to move elsewhere

within the province. However, more men left the province in the 1996-2001 period than women (-4,418 versus -1,945 respectively).

### ***Women with Disabilities***

In a recent statistical report (Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission 2003), Nova Scotia had the highest incidence of people with disabilities in Canada in 2001 (20.1 percent versus 14.6 percent), and the highest rate of women with disabilities in Canada. Disability rates are lowest in the metro area compared with other areas of the province. Of Nova Scotia women with disabilities, 38.9 percent had their disability determined as “severe” or “very severe.” Women with disabilities face higher than average unemployment rates and lower than average income and education levels. One third of women with disabilities are among the lowest 20 percent of earners in Nova Scotia. Almost 50 percent of income assistance recipients in Nova Scotia are persons with disabilities. Women with disabilities in the province identified the following factors as being necessary for employment: modified or reduced work hours (30.5 percent), job redesign (22.4 percent) and the need for technical aids (8.9 percent). Barriers to employment were identified as the loss of secure income, lack of employment and lack of training.

### ***Unemployment and Labour Force Participation Rates***

Women living in rural and small town Nova Scotia are less likely to be employed than are women in larger urban centres (Singh 2002: 7). In 2001, female unemployment in Metro Halifax was 7.2 percent, the female participation rate was 62.6 percent and the employment rate was 58.1 percent (see Appendix C, Table C-2). In contrast, in the most-rural areas, female unemployment rates were triple the metro rate (ranging from 22.1 percent to 33.4 percent). Female participation rates in most-rural areas ranged from 46.8 percent to 54.1 percent, and female employment rates ranged from 35.1 percent to 37 percent.

According to the Aboriginal Population Profile (Statistics Canada 2001a), the participation rate for Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia was 57.1 percent, the unemployment rate 19.9 percent and the employment rate 45.7 percent in 2001. According to research cited by McIntyre et al. (2001), unemployment levels for Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq living on reserve have been one half to two thirds of the labour force over the last three decades. Similar employment/ unemployment statistics regarding African Nova Scotia women or immigrant women are not available.

Although the data clearly indicate a more viable and vibrant labour market for metro women versus non-metro women, there are degrees of disparity among rural areas in the province. While the economies of some rural areas are lagging, this is not true for all rural areas, or all parts of rural counties. Women in some of Nova Scotia’s small towns have unemployment rates closer to, although higher than, the metro area (see the Colchester County example in Appendix C, Table C-2).

According to the 2001 data, women experienced lower labour force participation rates and lower employment rates than men, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas. There was, however, variation in the degrees of difference between male and female rates. In the case of unemployment rates in the Metro Halifax area, male and female



unemployment rates were similar, at 7.1 percent and 7.2 percent respectively. In some rural counties, females had higher unemployment rates than men (see Guysborough County, for example, where the female unemployment rate was 24.5 percent versus the male unemployment rate of 21.4 percent). In other rural counties, the male unemployment rates were higher (see, for example, Victoria County, where female unemployment rates were 33.4 percent while male rates were 34.6 percent). A more thorough and complete study of the labour force characteristics of women in rural Nova Scotia is recommended, but is beyond the scope of this study.

### ***Education***

A much higher percentage of women who finished high school, and women with a university degree, across all age groups, lived in Metro Halifax compared to non-metro and most-rural areas in 2001. Trades certification among women was slightly higher in the non-metro and most-rural areas. The number of women community college graduates was about the same, regardless of area (see Appendix C, Table C-3). The range of difference in high school graduation certification between metro and most-rural areas was great. For example, for women age 20 to 34, 9.3 percent had less than high school in the metro area, 17 percent in non-metro areas and 20 percent in the most-rural areas. For women 45 to 64, 25 percent of those living in the metro area had not finished high school, with 39 percent in non-metro areas and 46 percent in the most-rural areas. Although the differences are large across all age groups by area, they were most evident in the older age groups (45 to 64).

The 2001 statistics show a much higher percentage of women living in Metro Halifax had completed a university certificate, diploma or degree, across all age groups as compared to non-metro and most-rural areas. For example, 34.8 percent of metro women aged 20 to 34 had a university degree, diploma or certificate, while only 15.9 percent of most-rural women have a similar designation. In the 35 to 44 age group 28.9 percent of metro women, versus 10 percent of most-rural women had a university certificate, degree or diploma. In the 45 to 64 age group 24 percent of metro women, 13.9 percent of non-metro women and 11.5 percent of most-rural women had a university degree, diploma or certificate. However, in most cases the percentage of most-rural women with a university degree, diploma or certificate is higher than that of men from the same area.

Although a higher percentage of students enrolled in graduate and undergraduate university degree programs in Nova Scotia and in Canada are women, women continue to be underrepresented in graduate and undergraduate programs in engineering and applied science, and in graduate programs in math and physical science. Women in the province make up close to half of community college students, but only 10 percent are enrolled in trades and technology programs and only 26 percent are enrolled in information technology programs (McFadyen 2002: 25). The equitable participation of women in these areas of study is crucial to their continued involvement and contribution to the new economy.

Education for women from African and First Nations communities in Nova Scotia has been impeded by the systemic racism documented in Nova Scotia schools (Pachai 1990; Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Battiste and Barman 1995; Bernard et al. 2003). The lower rates of high school graduation have had an impact on entry into post-secondary education, and the universities themselves have been slow to respond to the well-

documented needs of students from both groups (see, for example, the Dalhousie University Task Force on Access to Dalhousie for Black and Native People 1989). Some professional schools in the universities are trying to rectify this (e.g., social work and law) by providing targeted programs and community-based programs. The University College of Cape Breton, in particular, has programs and support systems to encourage more Mi'kmaq students to enter the university. Among African and Mi'kmaq students enrolled in these various programs, a high proportion is women.

### ***Income and Employment Earnings***

Across all education levels and in almost all occupational categories in Canada, women still earn less than men. Some women have no personal sources of income while others are forced to work part time, because of the lack of full-time work or because of the limitations placed on their ability to work due to family and household responsibilities. Income levels also vary by province, with women in Atlantic Canada having the lowest average incomes compared to women in every other part of the country. Education levels play a large role in the income levels of Canadian women; women with university degrees earn much more than women with lower levels of education (Statistics Canada 2000).

In Nova Scotia, women's average employment earnings are much less than men's, both for women who work full time and for women in non-standard work, such as part-time, seasonal and temporary jobs. Forty-two percent of all women workers compared to 37 percent of all men workers earned less than \$10,000 in 1995 (McFadyen 2000: 9-10). Average earnings, full and part time, are generally lower for rural women than for Metro Halifax women. Average earnings, full and part time, are lower for women than men in general, regardless of area. In 2001, women in Nova Scotia's most-rural counties had average earnings between \$13,609 and \$15,644 compared with \$23,908 for Metro Halifax women and \$37,013 for Metro Halifax men in 2001 (see Appendix C, Table C-3).

In our consultations with service providers, we heard:

*Many of the women who use our services are into seasonal work. Women are working as waitresses, cleaning rooms, doing other tourism-related work or working in the local tomato plant. They get laid off every fall and hired back in spring. Almost everything is seasonal. Most of the jobs are low wage — \$6 to \$8 an hour. Many people don't get benefits. Some people drive to work in town. For some, that's a three-hour drive each way. Some women are doing that. We have more than 1,000 people on a waiting list here looking for jobs in the local area.*

The incidence of low income is much higher among Black women and racially visible women than for all women in Nova Scotia (McFadyen 2000: 12-15). More than half of on- or off-reserve Aboriginal women in Nova Scotia are earning less than \$10,000 per year. Fifty-nine percent of women with disabilities in Nova Scotia earn less than \$15,000 per

year.

Nova Scotia women contribute less to the Canada Pension Plan than do men, because they earn less money, tend to take family-related absences from employment and rely heavily on part-time, seasonal and temporary work (McFadyen 2000: 26).

### ***Employment by Sector***

In 2001, most Nova Scotia women were employed in the health/education, business services and wholesale/retail sectors (see Appendix C, Table C-5). A higher percentage of non-metro women versus metro women were employed in agriculture/resource industries and manufacturing, although the numbers are small. A higher percentage of Metro Halifax women were employed in finance and real estate than women in the non-metro and most-rural areas of Nova Scotia (8.2 percent versus 4.2 percent and 3.2 percent respectively). The same was true for women employed in the business services sector (17.5 percent of metro women versus 10 percent and 7.4 percent respectively). It is important to note that the agriculture/resource-based industries sector employed the lowest number of women of any sector across the province in 2001. Employment in the health and education sector was fairly similar for women in Metro Halifax and the non-metro and most-rural areas (28.6 percent, 30 percent and 27.8 percent respectively).

More than half of Nova Scotia women work in low-paying, full-time jobs, such as clerical or secretarial, and sales or service, which are among the lowest paying of all the occupational categories. Many of these are low-level, knowledge-based economy jobs, in that there is computer use, Internet use, computerized inventory, etc. Not all of this work has been studied in detail, but recent research (Putnam et al. 2000) on women's work in call centres shows that the women experience routine and repetitive shift work, with problems of job security and very little opportunity for advancement.<sup>2</sup> Women are underrepresented in high-paying occupation groups, such as natural and applied science/engineering/math/computer science (1.6 percent), business/finance and administrative (8.5 percent) and management (9.1 percent) (McFadyen 2000: 17).

### ***Poverty***

Women are the majority of the poor in Canada.<sup>3</sup> Nineteen percent of Canadian women (2.8 million women) live in poverty (Statistics Canada 2000), and Nova Scotia statistics on poverty mirror Canadian ones. In 1997, 20 percent of Nova Scotia women were living on low incomes, and Nova Scotia women appear to be more vulnerable to poverty than men (McFadyen 2000: 29). In Nova Scotia, as across the country, unattached women, senior women and female lone parents have the highest incidence of low incomes, and women make up the majority of social assistance recipients. The child poverty rates of children from female lone-parent families are much higher in Nova Scotia than the Canadian average (McFadyen 2000: 33). In Canada as a whole, women with disabilities, recent immigrants and members of visible minorities are more likely to live in poverty than the general population (Lochhead and Scott 2000). These groups are more likely to experience poverty whether urban or rural (Vera-Toscano et al. 2001: 4). The incidence of low income is much higher among Black women and racially visible women than for all women in Nova Scotia (McFadyen 2000: 12).

What is important to realize about poverty is that it limits the ability of women to make choices.

Being poor limits your choices and is not simply a matter of bad budgeting. Managing on a very low income is like a seven-day per week job from which there is no vacation or relief. Poverty grinds you down, body and soul.... When women are poor, they are not free. Their choices are very limited. The poverty of women carries high short- and long-term costs for all Canadians, some immeasurable (Morris 2002).

### ***Rural Women and Jobs in the New Economy***

There are three primary routes for women to access the new economy: directly through employment, by obtaining training and education that would lead to employment and through self-employment. Yet there seem to be barriers to women's access through each of these routes, which means women are not able to participate fully in rural development. The literature demonstrates this is not due to a lack of desire on behalf of women, but rather, is due to a lack of directive policies and programs that address the specific social and economic challenges that rural women face. In particular, there are social and economic challenges for women on low income. But women at many income levels experience many of the challenges to greater and lesser degrees.

Entrepreneurship is often mentioned in economic development strategies as a place of opportunity for women, as a route into the new economy. Yet research suggests rural women entrepreneurs face many barriers. This analysis of rural women in new economy jobs begins by discussing entrepreneur and self-employment issues, and then turns to issues facing women using other routes into the new economy. We outline four key challenges: availability of jobs, prior work experiences, the lack of a rural transportation infrastructure and difficulties accessing computers and ICTs. Each of these is a structural problem linked to gender patterns and to processes of rural underdevelopment.

### ***Self-Employment as a Job Creation Strategy***

In a brief presented to the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, ACOA indicated that there are 45,300 self-employed women in Atlantic Canada, representing 35 percent of the self-employed in the region (ACOA 2002). The vast majority are unincorporated with no paid help, and only 10 percent are in the goods-producing sector. Rural women entrepreneurs are mostly sole proprietors, with small annual earnings. The majority do business in the service sector/retail, food service, tourism and consulting.

A survey of 250 rural women entrepreneurs and potential entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia presents a picture of self-employed women (Women's CED Network 2002). Of the women business owners, 75 percent were over the age of 40, and 39 percent reported they were primary caregivers for children or seniors. The majority (58 percent) had been business owners for more than five years. The largest group (25 percent) had completed a community college course; however, 48 percent had either a university degree or some university course work. Sixty-four percent of women business owners surveyed were sole proprietors, while only 19 percent were legally incorporated. Fifty-one percent of those surveyed had sales less

than \$26,000 a year. This is consistent with the findings of duPlessis, whose 1981-2001 study shows that women from rural and small town areas are less likely to earn \$20,000 or more from (unincorporated) non-farm self-employment activity compared to women in large urban centres. In addition, regardless of area, women with non-farm self-employment income are less likely than men to earn more than \$20,000 or more from this source (duPlessis 2004). These findings are significant, for without the wife's income, more than twice as many Nova Scotia families would fall below the poverty line (McFadyen 2000).

According to Statistics Canada, the annual earnings of self-employed women tend to be much lower than those of paid workers, and compared with employees, they are less likely to be covered by extended health, dental or disability insurance plans (Sunter 2003). Some self-employed women acquire coverage through a spouse or close relative; others must pay or do without. Similarly, the average self-employed woman who gives birth returns to work one month after having the baby, as opposed to an average of 10 months an employed woman earning Employment Insurance benefits takes. It is true that self-employed women may not be able to take extended maternity leave due to the demands of their business. However, this should at least be an option for them, designated through policy, especially considering that female self-employment is a growing force in the new Canadian economy.

Recent studies have identified several issues for women who are self-employed (see, for example, Women's CED Network 2002). Issues include access to credit, start-up and long-term business counselling, support networks for women in small business and access to information about small business development. (We explore these issues in more detail in Chapter 7.) The majority of women in rural small business are undercapitalized, not incorporated and have no other employees. A recent survey of women business owners in Atlantic Canada (Calhoun R&D 2003) showed that just under half (48 percent) were operated from the home of the owner. Women's home-based and micro-businesses are less likely to be eligible to access credit than larger businesses (Rooney et al. 2003).

We note a gap here between the discourse of policy makers and the reality of women in small business. In our consultations, we learned that economic development analysts regard women in small business as a potential opportunity in the new economy. Women in small business are urged to move into goods-producing businesses and export development. Yet such suggestions are not easily taken up by the typical rural small businesswoman with her lack of capital and small-scale enterprise.

This profile does not present a picture of a sector poised to take on the knowledge-based economy. Rather, it is a picture of a sector that, if left unsupported, will continue to earn a marginal living, struggle to balance home and work, and receive no benefits from our social safety net. It is recognized that "women represent an under-utilized source of skills and knowledge" (ACOA 2003: 7). Without strategic change to the policies that impact on women's lives, this potential will go untapped.

### ***Availability of Jobs***

Rural areas, with their high unemployment rates and lack of local jobs, present few opportunities for hiring directly in the new economy. As described in Chapter 2, there are fewer jobs in general (both full and part time) in rural areas, so there is greater competition for the few jobs that exist. Where new economy job opportunities exist, they are likely to be in or near the rural small towns. This means women in the more rural areas are less able to access the higher-paying, longer-term jobs that might be available in areas with many new economy job opportunities. As we have seen, analysts suggest there are possibilities for a modest knowledge-based economy in rural areas, but these are likely to concentrate in the medium-knowledge-intensive jobs, with some new jobs also emerging in resource sectors. The availability of jobs in the knowledge-based economy for low-income women will be somewhat dependent on the extent to which rural economic development policies are successful. The availability of jobs for low-income women will also depend on the extent to which labour market development policies attend to a broad range of skill needs.

### ***Prior Work Experience***

Employers want to hire workers with experience, and the issue of the lack of experienced workers for new economy jobs appears in many reports, including those from the Canadian Federation of Small Businesses (Hachey 2002; Harley 2001). This is a major barrier for rural women, since many women in rural areas lack work experience for new economy jobs. Further, for women living in poverty, there is often a lack of any paid work experience at all. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) programs are important here, but studies of rural small businesses suggest that rural employers may be unfamiliar with PLAR, and need support and training in recognizing the range of ways workers can acquire skills beyond gaining formal credentials and paid work. Training programs that provide co-op work experience have been suggested as another strategy for dealing with the issue of prior experience, but this is hampered in rural areas because of the low numbers of new economy enterprises and by the fact that small businesses with very low numbers of employees (typical of the rural small business profile) cannot see immediate benefit in terms of new hirings.

In our consultations, we heard that a further barrier for immigrant women and racially visible women is the racism that enters into hiring processes. We heard about the resistance among some rural employers to hiring women for more non-traditional jobs, as well as problems in small business cultures in some rural areas concerning appropriate work for women. We also heard about the time it takes to turn such situations around. In one consultation, we were told of a two-year project in Nova Scotia with the Longshore Association

*to develop an environment where women could conceivably go there and work.*

Issues around hiring practices and workplace culture are central to the issue of women gaining the kinds of work experiences they need to gain advances in employment in the new economy.

We heard also from service providers about the stigma attached to being poor.

*The attitude of the business community toward poverty and low-income people, and the stereotyping that they indulge in, has a bigger impact on women than it does on men. We need front-end support just to work on women's self esteem. The linkages between social and economic development are very evident.*

### ***Transportation***

For some women, the route into the new economy is through training or upgrading, and requires employment counselling and support. Addressing transportation needs for individual women has long been recognized by providers of programs for women, yet it seems that in services offered by federal and provincial agencies, there continues to be a lack of attention

to the actual conditions in rural areas, where job centres, for example, may be located at some distance from where rural women live. In an area where bus service is either non-existent or infrequent, even a 30-minute trip is very problematic, and in rural Nova Scotia women often live more than an hour from where job centres and employment assistant resources are located. This passage from a recent report on a project for rural women in Nova Scotia enrolled in technical programs at a rural community college is typical of what we heard from service providers in our consultations.

The re-entry women connected to the ET Project spoke of problems with transportation. Just getting to a bus stop was often a major barrier for one woman who lived in a centre off the bus route. Bus schedules meant that another woman spent 12 hours outside her home before beginning to do homework, housework, and taking time for her children. For yet another woman who did not own a computer, it meant she couldn't return to school in the evening to use a computer for assignments. Most did not own a car, and those who did could not afford repairs, new tires, or gas (Women's CED Network 2003: 20).

Looking for work, getting to and from work or reaching education and training opportunities in the new economy is particularly difficult for women on income assistance.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Difficulties Accessing Computers and ICT***

Rural women in Nova Scotia who seek employment in the new economy need access to, and familiarity with, ICTs, both as an employability skill and as a tool for upgrading and job search. Yet there is a gender divide in computer use. Studies of the digital divide (see Chapter 2) show that there are three distinct groups of people who do not use computers, and all non-user groups are dominated by women (Reddick et al. 2000). Of particular interest in the context

of rural women are the "Type 1 non-users" — people who can see that the Internet has value to them, but who face cost barriers and a lack of technical skills. According to the study, 69 percent of Type 1 non-users are women (Reddick et al. 2000: 3). As one service provider said during our consultations:

*Many women are afraid of computers. They've never seen one and could never afford to have one, so they don't know the potential that is there. It would be a good start if these women were at least taught that a computer is a tool that can be used to run a business or find information.*

Access is affected by both income and rurality. Inadequacies in welfare incomes as well as chronic unemployment and underemployment mean many low income women do not have enough money for basic telephone service let alone Internet access.<sup>5</sup> Further, many women do not have the advantage of workplace access. Even if employed, women are less likely than men to use a computer at work, and the lowest estimated computer use rates are in Atlantic Canada (Lin and Popovic 2003). This results in a two-tiered system where people with resources have access to a wide range of services and those without resources do not. Here

is a contradiction. There is the assumption that accessibility is increased when information is on-line.<sup>6</sup> And there has been attention to capacity building (federal government connectivity policy). But these do not help a rural woman who is miles away from a CAP site or if she has a computer, cannot afford the Internet connection (assuming she has a phone or cable connection), or lacks the skills to do effective on-line searches, or has outdated software. Even if computers are located in the home, women often place their computer needs after those of their children (Balka 1997).

In addition to access, women need training in ICT use. With home and family responsibilities women tend to have significantly less leisure time to invest in public computer access training and orientation (Balka 1997). Alongside this aspect of women's family lives are the inadequacies of public services available for ICT literacy and training in rural areas, due to the lack of ongoing core funding to keep programs at CAP sites open, to provide funds for repair or to pay staff to do training. Rural women need training and facilitation in computer skills, from basic to advanced. This training has to be local and easy to access. There have to be special programs to meet the diverse needs of women, including transportation and child care allowances, and flexible time and scheduling considerations. For some rural women, the first steps along a route to employment require these basic infrastructure elements.

### ***Social Policies***

In this chapter, we have touched on a number of issues that are typically understood to be within the realm of social policy, not economic policy. Yet it is clear that economic policy initiatives for drawing more rural women in to the new economy will not work without attention to a range of social issues. Indeed, we argue that social infrastructures are as critical to new economy jobs for women as are physical infrastructure initiatives. Social issues, such as health, poverty, dental care, family violence and justice, addictions and availability of quality child care are all factors that have long been noted as issues facing women in poverty. Stress from these problems is exacerbated when women live further distances from services, such as health care clinics, family resource centres, employment centres and literacy programs. These are very real barriers for women accessing first levels of training to develop skills



for entry into new economy jobs. Social policy initiatives have to be developed alongside economic policies, and have to be considered holistically to address gaps and inconsistencies that result in the exclusion of women. In the web of policies across departments, planning is needed to make the whole system more inclusive of women and rural realities.

Feminist economists and other social analysts have stressed that social policies are central if economic revitalization of rural areas is to occur (Elson 1994; MacDonald 1994; Waring 1988). Canada has a choice regarding the way it links social and economic policy in its new economy strategies (Jenson 2003). What are some of the issues regarding social infrastructure that inhibit the entry of women, especially lower-income women into jobs, in the new economy? Further, in what ways do economic development policies and strategies address the barriers facing rural women? It is to these questions we turn in the next two chapters of this report.

### **Key Summary Points**

- Women in rural Nova Scotia live within the context of rural underdevelopment, and many are marginalized by poverty.
- Women seeking entry into the new economy through self-employment face issues including access to credit, start-up and long-term business counselling, support networks for women in small business, and access to information about small business development.
- Women seeking new economy jobs in rural areas face issues of job availability, lack of prior work experience in new economy jobs, hiring practices that create barriers to immigrant and racially visible women, and transportation barriers.
- Women who seek employment in the new economy need access to, and familiarity with, ICTs, both as an employability skill and as a tool in upgrading and job searches. Yet there is a gender divide in computer use. Women's access to computers is limited in rural areas by financial and transportation issues, as well as the lack of an ongoing rural public training infrastructure in all levels of ICT use.

#### 4. SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL WOMEN

As we argued in Chapter 2, current rural underdevelopment in Nova Scotia is, in part, a historical consequence of federal economic policies that have eroded the economic infrastructure in rural communities. Here, we describe the federal government's restructuring of its social and income-support policies as part of its effort over the last decade to position Canada in the global economy. In addition to the restructuring, the federal government has not fully implemented a comprehensive national child-care strategy, an infrastructure central to women's participation in paid work. The actions/inactions at the federal level have had consequences for provincial policies, as have the massive cuts in federal transfer payments through the 1990s. We argue that the social and income support restructuring has created challenges for many rural women who wish to access jobs in the new economy.

Canada's social programs were restructured in a profound way in 1995. Federal legislation that set standards for social assistance in all jurisdictions was repealed, cost-sharing arrangements between federal and provincial governments for social assistance and key social services were abandoned, and the federal government cut the amount of its financial transfers to the provinces for health, post-secondary education, and social assistance. The result has been cuts in welfare rates and tightened eligibility rules, cuts to social services — including shelters for battered women, home care for people with disabilities, increased tuition fees and high debt loads for students, and a beleaguered health care system.

This restructuring has harmed women, who are the majority of the poor in Canada, the majority of those reliant on social assistance, and major users of social services. For Aboriginal women, women of colour, immigrant women, women with disabilities, single mothers, and elderly women, groups who have the highest rates of poverty, the impact is most severe (Day and Brodsky 2000: 6).

##### **Social Infrastructure: Four Key Examples**

We highlight four areas of the social and income support infrastructure that have had an impact on rural communities and negatively affect the capacity of rural women to access jobs in the new economy: failure to implement fully a national child care system, federal employment and training benefits (EI legislation), provincial income support benefits (provincial social assistance legislation) and erosion of public funding for the not-for-profit and voluntary sector.

Action and inaction in these policy areas affect women along a continuum, from women on social assistance and those who are unemployed, to women on low incomes as well as women who work part time, or are self-employed, or engaged in other forms of non-

standard work. This latter point is of particular significance in relation to the new economy. A feature of the new economy is that there are more and more jobs carried out part time or through contract work. Yet, income and training support policies exclude many of these non-standard workers from benefits.

### ***Early Childhood Education and Care***

Canada does not have a universal, high-quality early childhood education and care system, although the importance of having a national child-care strategy has been discussed since the 1970s. Previous federal attempts to work with the provinces/territories to develop national strategies have not been successful, and progress has been further hampered with the withdrawal of support for child care available through the Canada Assistance Plan and reduced transfer payments. Currently, some of the groundwork needed for such a system has been “laid by the vision statements and principles already agreed to by federal, provincial/territorial governments in the National Children’s Agenda, the Early Childhood Development Agreement (2000) and the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Care” (Friendly 2004: 6) and recent announcements following the 2004 federal election.

For decades, reports have stressed that for women to work or to upgrade their education and skills, access to high-quality, affordable child care is essential. In addition, there is a strong body of research that shows that an accessible, high-quality early learning program is the foundation to lifelong learning and success in the new economy (Friendly 2004). Research suggests that for every dollar invested in high-quality child care, there is a \$2 benefit to children, parents and society (Cleveland and Krashinsky 1998). Given the continued unequal division of labour in the household, with the corresponding responsibility for child care falling more heavily on women (Colman 1998), for the government to fail to implement a national child-care system is to accept that women will continue to be unequally constrained in their employment possibilities by this aspect of domestic labour.

Nova Scotia women clearly have difficulty accessing quality child care. Only an estimated 23 percent (10,700) of Nova Scotia children are in licensed full or part-day child-care programs (Friendly et al. 2002). In many rural areas, there are no licensed day cares. Nova Scotia has only a limited number of subsidized spaces in licensed child-care facilities, although there have been small increases and, thus, affordability is a barrier for all parents and an even greater barrier for lone parents and low-income families, including those on social assistance.<sup>3</sup> We heard details about how this lack of accessible and affordable child care is a barrier for rural women.

*Community Services allows for \$400 a month for child care whether someone has one child or five...that’s all you’re allowed. At least 80 percent of the women I work with need child care. It’s always an issue, especially for rural areas where there just aren’t any [formal child care services].*

Rural families face additional child-care burdens, such as increased distance to and from care, lack of part-time spaces, and safety issues. This makes flexibility of care important, with options for extended hours to meet the needs of commuters, and/or seasonal workers.

The lack of rural child care is just one example of the failure of a market-based system of care. Lack of child care is a barrier for rural women in finding and retaining employment and, at the same time, lack of demand for child care due to high local unemployment levels makes it difficult to operate a child-care facility.

The four pillars of any proposed early childhood education and care system should be affordability, accessibility, flexibility and quality. The necessary steps toward the goal of universal child care are outlined by Friendly (2004: 6-10) and include the need for a clear public commitment from government, a specific action plan, a well-crafted public policy framework, the designation of multi-year funds, the establishment of an early childhood education and care secretariat, a national plan for collecting and analyzing data, and support for long-term research and evaluation. As well, any progress will require an effective federal/provincial partnership and collaboration.

The implementation of a national child-care system should be considered a necessary part of an economic development infrastructure, yet this public policy initiative seems to be non-existent on the economic development agenda. Feminist economists argue that it has been difficult for economists working within traditional economic practices to recognize that issues within the so-called private sphere are actually pivotal to economic planning.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Federal Employment Insurance Legislation***

The *Employment Insurance Act* has two parts. Part I sets out regulations guiding eligibility for income replacement benefits for people who are unemployed. Part II, Employment Benefit Support Measures (ESBMs), relates to transition-to-work initiatives, including training. To be eligible for benefits under Part II, individuals must be eligible under Part I. Thus, any analysis that demonstrates a reduction in eligibility for rural women under Part I is also demonstrating rural women's ineligibility under Part II.

The *Employment Insurance Act* (Bill C-12, implemented in 1997) brought changes that have been particularly hard-hitting in areas of the country with high incidences of poverty. Because rural Nova Scotia is highly dependent on transfer payments from the federal government, including transfer payments for EI, reductions to EI benefits have had a significant impact

on the economic well-being of people living on low incomes, including seasonal workers. The negative effects of these changes on Canadian women have been scrutinized and well documented in many reports.<sup>3</sup> Here, we address two of the impacts: the massive reduction in eligibility for income supports and the consequent reduced access to funding for training.

The analysis undertaken by Critoph (2002) showed that between 1994 and 1998, the percentage of unemployed *actually receiving* assistance dropped to less than 40 percent nationally, and 60 percent of the drop in claimants was among workers earning less than \$15,000. Townson's analysis (2003: 14) showed that there has been a steady decrease in the eligibility for coverage, such that by 2000, "only 49.9 percent of all of those unemployed in 2000 were *potentially eligible* for benefits [italics added]."<sup>4</sup>

Considering the higher unemployment rates and rates of seasonal employment in rural Nova

Scotia, particularly those areas under more stress economically and socially, this pattern of reduced eligibility is particularly problematic. Changes to EI have been hardest on non-standard<sup>5</sup> and part-time workers, of whom women comprise the majority (Townson 2003; CLC 2003). The number of hours non-standard and part-time workers work within a given time period often fails to satisfy the eligibility requirements.<sup>6</sup> Women who are self-employed are not eligible at all. Further, because women “leave the labour force for child care and other family responsibilities, a disproportionate number of women must qualify as new entrants” (Townson 2003: 47). Changes to the *Employment Insurance Act* have meant that claimants receiving maternity or parental benefits within 208 weeks prior to their qualifying period do not have to qualify as new entrants to the labour force. Nonetheless, the many women who leave the labour force for other family responsibilities, as well as those not eligible for parental and maternity benefits in the first place, are still penalized by the new entrant requirements. In addition, eligibility requirements have reduced the number of women who can access maternity and parental benefits.<sup>7</sup>

Given the reliance of women in many rural communities on EI, especially in areas dependent on seasonal employment, the loss of EI coverage leaves women struggling with poverty while between jobs.<sup>8</sup> These changes make it more difficult to access employment opportunities (in or out of the new economy) and also make it difficult to access education and training opportunities that might lead to employment in the new economy.

Support for training is a crucial infrastructure element for economic development, yet publicly supported opportunities for it have been eroded under federal policies. Under the federal *Employment Insurance Act* (Part II), funds that support training are only available to people who meet the eligibility requirements for income support (Part I). The research documenting the decreasing number of Canadians eligible for income supports means that decreasing numbers are eligible for federal training funds. In Nova Scotia, rural women’s attachment to the labour market (more non-standard, more part time, more time out of the labour market for child rearing) means they are among those likely to face ineligibility under Part I and so are not eligible for training possibilities under Part II.

Women’s access to training has been affected by a number of other changes in the federal and provincial funding environment that occurred at the same time as the EI eligibility changes (between 1996 and 2000). Critoph (2002) summarized these changes:

- devolution of more labour market adjustment programs to the provinces, under the variously negotiated federal/provincial/territorial labour market development agreements (LMDAs);
- termination of consolidated revenue funding<sup>9</sup>;
- prohibition on direct purchase of training, which was replaced by individually negotiated financial assistance;
- increased use of third-party providers (extension of decentralization and local flexibility)<sup>10</sup>;
- termination of designated groups (which means that equity for women has lost some of

its policy backing); and

- direction of employment benefit support measures toward skills training, not counselling, making bridging-type programs less available than they used to be — again disadvantaging women who might need some build-up work before training for jobs in the knowledge-based economy.

This erosion of the federal infrastructure for income support and training is counterproductive in light of new economy demands for skilled workers. The loss of the creativity, commitment and skill of a large portion of the female work force does not make sense when all federal and provincial documents point to the centrality of education and training in positioning Canada in the global economy.

### ***Social Assistance in Nova Scotia***

In Nova Scotia, women in poverty with no access to EI benefits turn to social assistance. In 1998, as part of the reform of municipal governance, all social assistance and family benefits programs were integrated and delivered by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. In 2001, a single policy was introduced called Employment Support and Income Assistance. Women who apply for assistance are assessed to determine whether, with supports, they may be able to enter the work force in a short time. If so, they are placed in the Employment Support Services stream and receive benefits and a range of supports that may lead to employment. Other women, who are unable to work, can receive and remain on family benefits without looking for or obtaining employment.

According to National Council of Welfare data on 2002 welfare incomes, a single employable woman on assistance in Nova Scotia would receive \$4,980 each year to cover all her basic needs. A single mother with one child would receive \$8,760 (CCSD 2002). Compare these amounts with Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) with a rural LICO limit of \$15,711 before-tax income and \$12,016 after tax income. (See Appendix C, Endnote 1.) Clearly, social assistance rates in Nova Scotia are not enough to cover basic human needs.

In one consultation, we were told:

*Without adequate income for these very basic needs, it is hard to imagine how a person could find time to think about all things IT [information technology], never mind get herself to a CAP site or something.*

In a consultation with a service provider, we discussed the additional issues faced by women of colour.

*The challenges for women of colour include the lack of culturally diverse workers and a lack of culturally diverse policies. As well, for women of colour on income assistance, there is no allowance for the additional costs of culturally specific products or for ethnic foods. One policy does not work for different cultures. The social assistance policy has not been analyzed from a*

*culturally diverse point of view.*

### ***Cutbacks to the Not-for-Profit Sector***

Unrelated specifically to EI and social assistance changes, but connected to issues of training and community development in rural areas, are the cutbacks that have led to the dismantling of rural infrastructures that support community groups in the not-for-profit sector. Unlike in urban areas, where people often have a choice of voluntary, state and for-profit service providers, in rural areas it is the smaller, more local not-for-profit and voluntary organizations that are often the sole provider of certain services and supports (Bruce et al. 1999). In the past, these services have included bridging programs, basic literacy, educational upgrading and general skills training, computer and Internet training, child-care services, transportation, access to computers and the Internet (through the mostly volunteer-driven CAP site program) and other supports provided by women's centres, family resource centres and food banks.

These

are, for many rural women, the sole means available for the skills, supports and services needed to obtain and retain employment and to access the new economy. When the training funding through consolidated revenue funding and the direct provision of training existed, there were more women-focussed groups run by trainers who had a deep understanding of the conditions that supported women's successful entry into the labour market, but this knowledge base has disappeared with the demise of many of the women-focussed programs which had been supported under previous policy frameworks (National Women's Reference Group 1999: 6).

There is a contradiction here. With government cutbacks, globalization, and a focus on the economic bottom line, government increasingly looks to the private, not-for-profit and voluntary sectors for alternatives to service delivery, with the intended goal of delivering programs and services to achieve government objectives in a "more innovative, client-oriented and affordable manner" (Treasury Board of Canada, cited in Pal 2001: 217). Ironically, coinciding with this increasing dependence on the not-for-profit and voluntary sector, the government offers fewer and fewer resources to support and fund this sector. In our consultations with service providers, we were told that the lack of core funding for community-based organizations leads to staff instability. We were also told that because community based organizations have to apply for new projects every year, organizations cannot make long-term plans. The lack of core and multi-year funding creates enormous problems for many women's organizations and is especially consequential in rural areas. We heard this from a service provider.

*Since 1999, we have sponsored four different technology projects designed to assist rural women to develop basic and intermediate computer skills, basic Web site design, on-line research, on-line home-based income opportunities, e-business and basic Internet skills. While employing women from rural communities to train local women at community centres and CAP sites, the curriculum and the projects are women-centred. The projects have offered child care and transportation subsidies, flexible programming around women's schedules and local delivery in four rural counties in Nova Scotia. To date, more than 2,400 rural women have participated in these projects*

*attending more than 1,400 individual and group technology sessions. Although participatory evaluations from each project have been extremely positive, long-term funding has never been available. To date, we have managed to source new funding for each project from four different government departments; however, we are unsure that we will be able to continue to redesign the project to fit into ever changing funding programs.*

In a recent report, *Funding Matters*, the Canadian Council on Social Development argued that unless these funding strategies are changed, the voluntary sector, which includes the not-for-profit sector, will suffer from increasing insecurity (CCSD, cited in the Voluntary Sector Initiative 2003: 5). The Accord between the Government of Canada and the voluntary sector (Voluntary Sector Initiative 2000) outlines values and principles that should govern the relationship between these two entities. The impetus for the creation of the accord was the increasing pressures faced by the voluntary and not-for-profit sector, increasing government awareness of the importance of the sector and the use of similar accords in other areas. The following two of the three commitments by the Government of Canada show the importance of funding policies and practices, and the role of the sector in policy development.

Recognize and consider the implications of its legislation, regulations, policies and programs on voluntary sector organizations including the importance of funding policies and practices for the further development of the relationship and the strengthening of the voluntary sector's capacity;

Recognize its need to engage the voluntary sector in open, informed and sustained dialogue in order that the sector may contribute its experience, expertise, knowledge, and ideas in developing better public policies and in the design and delivery of programs (Voluntary Sector Initiative 2000).

The Voluntary Sector Initiative (2003: 6) recommended the Government of Canada implement the Accord and Code of Good Practice on funding, including providing “non-restrictive, multi-year funding for voluntary sector organizations, allowing them the flexibility to allocate these funds to best meet their mission.”

The not-for-profit sector is a key infrastructure element for the new economy. The sector is also central to thriving rural communities. These are the groups that develop proposals for projects, implement them, and serve as advocates for rural community development. In our consultations, service providers spoke of the irony in current federal and provincial discourse of “capacity building” in rural communities, after a decade of funding policies that have undermined the very groups that had for years contributed to sustainable rural communities.

### **How Have These Restructuring Strategies Affected Women in Rural Nova Scotia?**

The restructuring of (or inaction on) various social infrastructure strategies and policies affects women in different ways, depending on where they are situated on a continuum of income,



employment and training. All women with children are affected to some degree by the lack of affordable quality child care, let alone access to child care that encompasses early learning strategies identified by early childhood educators and educational policy makers. Women within the EI or social assistance system (eligible for EI or social assistance) are affected by the restructuring, as are women outside the system (women in low-paying jobs or women in various forms of non-standard work). The effects are greater on women living in poverty or on low income. One difficulty for this study was the number of times we ran into gaps in statistics on women. Many reports commented on the lack of gender-disaggregated data, especially data on particular groups of women. Townson (2003: 14) pointed out that there are no requirements in the EI legislation to either collect gender-disaggregated data or to deliver programs to designated groups. Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, the main source of data on non-standard work arrangements, does not collect data on employment of immigrants and visible minority women, nor of other groups, such as Aboriginal women or rural women, for whom the incidence of non-standard work arrangements may be different from women in general (Townson 2003). Statistics are not sufficient for government departments to know whether particular groups of women are being disadvantaged by any of the new processes. It is crucial in this regard to improve the availability of data on women and to break down gender-disaggregated data to provide information on rural, immigrant and visible minority women. Analysts in the European Union say that "failure to undertake gender (or ethnic) monitoring has been identified as a form of passive discrimination" (Rees 1998: 38).

### ***Effects on Self-Employed Women***

Women who are self-employed are not eligible for benefits under EI. This means training, maternity and sickness benefits, and the recently announced compassionate care benefit are not available to them. Self-employed women who wish to upgrade their skills for the new economy face the rising costs of training compounded by the lack of training availability in rural areas (both of which have resulted from the privatization of training and the erosion of local community-based organizations). Yet much of what is written about women in the new economy points to the importance of women entrepreneurs. So, in Canada and Nova Scotia economic policies and strategy documents that encourage women as small business owners co-exist with social infrastructure gaps in training and income support policies that create challenges. Such contradictions would not arise if there existed overall system-wide policies and strategies that took women's realities into account.

### ***Effects on Women Engaged in Part-Time, Seasonal and Contract Work***

Non-standard work, such as part time, contract, temporary, multiple job holders and self-employment, is a growing trend for women, increasing from 35 percent of women workers in 1989 to 41 percent in 1999 (Statistics Canada 2000: 103).<sup>11</sup> New technologies have expanded the opportunities for these alternative work patterns. Yet many women in these jobs fall outside the EI and social assistance system (and therefore are ineligible for such benefits as maternity leave and training), because their hours of work are insufficient for eligibility. So the contradiction here is between policies that exclude many women engaged in non-standard work at the same time as economic global trends in the New Economy depend on workers in non-standard forms of employment. Clearly, these trends in women's employment in the new economy are not accommodated by the current EI system.

### ***Effects on University Students on Low Income***

Under provincial employment support and income assistance regulations, women can only receive support for two years of post-secondary education (university or college) pursued full time. This policy makes it especially difficult for single mothers to attend university (MacDougall 2003). Students attending university who are unable to get summer jobs are not eligible to receive assistance. This makes it especially hard for women raising children while attending university, because their children are at home during the summer. One person we consulted commented:

*Social assistance has to provide benefits for single parents who want to attend university. Student loans and grants do not provide enough income to support a family, and even if they did, where would the family find support during the summer months? Women can be fantastic IT industry workers and innovators, but women on social assistance may never realize their potential if this policy remains the same. It's a real brain drain.*

The contradiction here is that while all the federal and provincial policy documents on the new economy stress how crucial post-secondary education is to growth in the new economy, there are social infrastructure policies that serve as barriers to those most excluded from new economy employment possibilities.

### ***Effects on Women in Low Paid Work***

Over half of Nova Scotia women work in low-paying full-time jobs, such as clerical or secretarial and sales or service (McFadyen 2000). Many rural women are in this category. A woman in full-time, low-paid work cannot access publicly funded supports to engage in training (child care, transportation, income support) to allow her to upgrade her skills to assist her in finding more economically secure positions in the new economy. “There are many people across the spectrum of the labour market and across the life span who could benefit from these services to find and keep work” (Harley 2001: 20). A service provider told us:

*Someone needs to be accountable for people who aren't attached to the DCS [Department of Community Services] or EI. They are stuck in the middle of nowhere. They don't have any recourse. Someone needs to have an interim policy that can assist people during this period.*

For low-income rural women, the reduced availability of community-based training, coupled with the lack of affordable, accessible child care and transportation problems, creates barriers for upgrading to assist in the transition into better-paying jobs in the new economy. It is very difficult for women on a low income to take two or three years away from paid work to upgrade their credentials, yet in the new economy, skills upgrading has been identified as a central labour market development strategy.

### **Delivery Issues in Social Infrastructure Processes**

For women who are eligible for benefits under EI or social assistance, aspects of the

delivery system create barriers, all of which indicate a lack of gender analysis at a number of levels through the policy process, from initial legislation to front-line delivery. Besides the various cutbacks in funding, processes in the delivery system have negative consequences for women. We discuss three aspects of this: intervention duration, complex mechanisms for access and gender bias in front-line delivery.

### ***Intervention Duration***

It is clear from many studies that long-term intervention is necessary for many women (whether low income, re-entry, entry or upgrading high school credentials) to make the transition from low-paid, low-skilled work to secure well-paying jobs with higher skill levels. National and international research points to the length of the process (Rees 1998) coupled with the social and income supports required for the duration, from initial counselling and upgrading, through training and then transition into the labour market. Investment in long-term intervention is crucial if Canada's economic policies are to ensure the inclusion of women's skills, creativity and tenacity in new economy enterprises. Yet, under EI legislation, accountability measures work in the opposite direction: they orient EI workers to shorter interventions that result in quick "returns to work."

Critoph's research (2002: 28) indicated that "intervention duration is one area where evidence suggests significant gender difference. Women participate at a significantly higher rate in short-term interventions." Women are more likely to have a peripheral (part-time, non-standard employment) relationship with the labour force and to have had absences from the workplace (maternity and early years child care), so may be considered higher risk in terms of a return to work. Women with high needs for support and training would require interventions of longer duration so are less "attractive" in terms of accountability measures. Thus, decisions regarding eligibility are driven by the accountability needs of the provider, not the needs of the client.

Unemployed women with higher education levels (some post-secondary education) may be more likely than other women to be considered good-risk clients, in that they might move into the labour market more quickly, and they might be able to benefit from direct training in knowledge-based-economy-related courses, since they already have the benefit of an educational background. So the women most affected by these "creaming processes" (Critoph 2002) linked to mandated accountability measures are those women who have lower levels of education and a more peripheral attachment to the labour market. Accountability measures mandated by federal EI legislation and built into the delivery of services serve as a barrier to many rural women. Similarly, at the provincial level, under the Department of Community Services, there is an emphasis on a rapid return to work for all welfare recipients, except those with very young children, which limits opportunities for longer-term training that would improve women's skill levels, enabling them to move into the labour market in more economically secure jobs. Given the skill levels required in secure well-paid new economy jobs, training and support interventions for many women need to be longer term, not short term. In one consultation, we were told:

*Career planning for disadvantaged women needs to take into account their life situation, and work with women to plan a long-term strategy for career satisfaction and economic self-sufficiency. That this is being overlooked in the new social assistance policy is evident in the focus on programs of two years duration or less. Until secretaries, hair stylists and personal care workers start making some serious money, I think we do women a great disservice by steering them in those directions. Better to turn out accountants, social workers, nurses and so on. That usually requires more intensive investments in career planning, funding for education and training, and support services (such as child care and after school programs) than does a quick fix approach.*

### ***Complex Mechanisms for Access***

Between 1996 and 2000, federal changes included the devolution of more labour market adjustment programs to the provinces, under the variously negotiated federal–provincial LMDAs. We learned in our consultations with service providers that the efforts by various levels of government to work horizontally and in partnership have created complex bureaucratic procedures that serve as barriers to women’s access to funding. Since the late 1990s in Nova Scotia, the LMDA has linked the federal Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), now known as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), with the provincial Department of Community Services. This has led to much complexity in applying for funding. For example, we heard about the difficulties faced by the Equality in Technology project, as those involved in developing the funding proposal and implementing the project negotiated the complex regulations and processes linking entitlements for potential female community college students through Nova Scotia’s Department of Community Services and HRSDC. In our consultations with service providers, we learned that one problem with these federal–provincial partnering agreements lies in the internal contradictions produced by frameworks that establish, on the one hand, modes of delivery which seem progressive and sensible (maintaining a principle of partnership, for example, through multi-sectoral processes) and, on the other hand, simultaneously increase barriers for particular groups mentioned in policies as requiring extra measures of support. The province has recently renegotiated its agreement with the federal government under the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework. Research should be done to track procedural and bureaucratic complexities arising from this partnership agreement.

### ***Gender Bias in Front-Line Delivery***

Front-line workers have a great deal of flexibility in the way social policies are interpreted, which can lead to inconsistent and sometimes biased delivery of service and implementation of policy (MacDougall 2003). The flexibility of interpretation means clients who are more knowledgeable about their entitlements are more likely to access benefits. For example, in our consultations with service providers we were given an example of the delivery of skills development benefits. With the prohibition on direct provision of training, each client has to negotiate her own benefit; women with fewer skills in negotiation, or without a strong advocate, are disadvantaged. A client or advocate who knows the full range of possibilities and entitlements, as well as being familiar with possibilities for training and employment in the area, is better able to negotiate financial support for training than is a woman who is first encountering re-entry or is a new entrant.

Gender inequities in the delivery of employment counselling programs are documented in research showing the “disposition of front-line staff toward training women for traditional female occupations” (Critoph 2002: 18). Many new economy jobs are not typically associated with women, so there is a need for front-line workers to be sensitive to gender issues and provide greater support for re-entry. Linked to this is the concern expressed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (Harley 2001: 20) that front-line workers do not actually know the range of jobs available in the local economy. This lack of knowledge, coupled with any pre-existing assumptions about “womens’ work,” can disadvantage female clients. Generally, findings from the reports we reviewed suggest that when the employment benefit support measures are delivered, there is great variability both in availability and in interpretation, which affects all applicants but particularly disadvantages women. Additional bias can arise for racially visible women. A service provider commented:

*There is a very limited number of workers who are not Caucasian. You have a few workers who are conscious of cultural differences, but there is still a myth that clients are clients because of laziness. They don't get it...they don't get the history.*

That policy can be interpreted in such a discretionary manner means there is a power difference between women and assistance workers, leading often to disrespectful and demoralizing treatment of women.

### **Key Summary Points**

- Assumptions of gender neutrality (embodied in the termination of designated group programs) will have a negative impact on women as long as there are societal processes which disadvantage women (including gender biases, a gender-segregated labour market, gender differences in child- and elder-care responsibilities, and lower wages for women).
- The failure to implement a national system of early childhood education and care continues to be a barrier to women, who are more deeply affected than men by this, because of the inequitable balance of power and resources within families and households. Twenty percent of Nova Scotia children are in licensed full- or part-day child-care programs. In many rural areas, there are no licensed day cares, and there are only a limited number of subsidized spaces in licensed child-care facilities.
- Key social infrastructure changes in federal EI and provincial social assistance have meant deteriorating income and training supports for rural women who wish to gain employment in new economy jobs. This is particularly true for women in non-standard work, an increasing feature of the current Canadian labour market.
- There is a lack of employment services in rural Nova Scotia that serve women other than those eligible for EI; these services are only available to EI clients.

- Employment Insurance and social assistance regulations encourage short-term interventions, which run contrary to the needs of many rural women wishing to move into jobs in the new economy.
- Statistics are not well enough gathered for government departments to know whether women are being disadvantaged by any of the new processes, particularly as regards information on rural, immigrant and visible minority women.
- Overall system-wide policies and strategies must be implemented to identify places in the inter- and intra-governmental systems where the needs of particular groups of women are not met. Inclusion will only be a reality if social and economic policies are constructed within a system framework of gender awareness and accountability.

We now examine major federal and provincial economic development policies.

## 5. RURAL WOMEN AND ECONOMIC POLICY

This chapter examines federal and provincial economic policies, and considers the extent to which they are inclusive of rural women. The approach is to examine the language in the economic frameworks/strategies and the indicators established to measure success. Included in our analysis of policies are the responses of Nova Scotians and Canadians to these policies through an examination of the records of public consultations and submissions.

Jane Jenson (2003) succinctly articulated the need for economic policies to be constructed on a sound social infrastructure. In her presentation to the Statistics Canada Economic Conference, she emphasized the importance of including social policy in the new economy, using the concept of the “social investment state” that treats quality social policy as a necessary support for the new economy. She argued that a well-designed social policy supports adaptability through lifelong learning, improves job quality, seeks to foster social inclusion into ICT and invests in children through quality services as well as higher incomes. She closely linked social policy, economic policy and employment policy. In a recent Canadian Broadcasting Corporation commentary, Jenson (2003a) stated that “good social policy is the foundation of a high-performing, innovative economy.”

This view has informed a central premise of our report, that economic policies must be built on, and developed alongside solid social policies. Analysis in previous chapters has revealed the extent to which infrastructure gaps persist in rural Nova Scotia. Rural areas require improvements to physical infrastructure (transportation, connectivity and other exchange systems), to social infrastructure (early education and child care, income and training support systems, funding for the not-for-profit sector in rural areas) and to employment opportunities. All of these infrastructure issues affect rural women, who are more likely to be engaged in non-standard work, poor, in low-paying jobs, less able to access credit, more likely to be responsible for child care within the family, and more likely to be non-users of ICTs. Policies have led to the loss of community sustainability in many rural and coastal areas. Changes to employment support (EI, for example) have left increasing numbers of Nova Scotia men and women less and less able to access the training they need to enter jobs in the new economy. Banks close, people leave, community education and training initiatives can no longer get funding, and community groups, on which so much of rural life depends, struggle from year to year on unstable project funding.

### **Canada’s Innovation Strategy**

In our consultations with government officials, Canada’s Innovation Strategy was identified as a crucial economic development policy. We were told repeatedly that the Strategy would have a significant impact on the policies of other government departments, both federal and provincial, and on programs arising from those policies.

Canada’s Innovation Strategy was launched jointly by the ministers of Industry and of Human Resources Development in 2000. Two documents outline key components of the Strategy: *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity* (Industry

Canada 2001) has goals in four areas: knowledge performance, skills, innovation environment and strengthening communities. *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians* (HRDC 2001) also sets goals in four areas: children and youth, post-secondary education, the adult labour force and immigration.

This division of jurisdiction between HRSDC and Industry Canada mirrors the traditional division between economic and social policy. Some might argue that by tying the two together within Canada's Innovation Strategy, the federal government is trying to demonstrate that

the social and economic strategies have equal value. However, given the state of the social infrastructure, we argue that economic development has proceeded at the expense of social development. While we agree that, operationally, government departments have to have separate jurisdictions, a system-wide gender strategy is required to ensure particular groups of women do not continue to be excluded from access to funding and program priorities.

In Chapter 4, we demonstrated various ways in which erosion of the social infrastructure has had a negative impact on women. Would there be attention to women in economic policy that would moderate the exclusions we identified in the social infrastructure? Or, would the exclusions be reinforced? In what ways does Canada's Innovation Strategy address the needs of women wishing to move into new economy jobs in rural Nova Scotia?

### ***Language of Inclusion***

The language in Canada's Innovation Strategy appears to be inclusive of rural Canada, particularly in its conceptualization of a new economy that includes a broad range of employment in rural areas. As we have seen in Chapter 2, it is important for rural areas that policy not take too narrow a view of what counts as new economy and what counts as innovation. *Achieving Excellence* (Industry Canada 2001: 6, 8) articulates a concept of innovation that recognizes that truck drivers use global positioning systems, crane operators use computerized controls, and farmers and resource-based industries are participants in the new economy.

Barely a decade ago, it was common to equate the knowledge-based economy with specific sectors, such as information and communications technologies, or with regions, such as Silicon Valley in the United States. Now the knowledge-based economy knows few, if any, industrial or geographic boundaries.

...

Innovation not only crosses all sectors, but also reaches into every urban centre and into the smallest rural, remote and First Nations communities.

Some language in Canada's Innovation Strategy appears to link economic and social development, and to value them equally. For example, in *Achieving Excellence* (Industry Canada 2001: 4), innovation is described as "the process through which new economic and social benefits are extracted from knowledge...a driving force in economic growth and social development." Similarly, *Knowledge Matters* (HRDC 2001: 6) states: "By providing opportunities for all Canadians to learn and to develop their skills and abilities, we can achieve our commitment to economic growth and prosperity and demonstrate our social



values of inclusion and equality.”

### ***Canadians Respond***

This stress on the importance of linking social and economic policy in a commitment to inclusion coincides with the views of many Canadians. It is interesting in this regard to examine the responses of Canadians to the concept of innovation as presented in *Achieving Excellence* and *Knowledge Matters*. A series of innovation summits was held across Canada in 2002, culminating in the National Summit on Innovation and Learning in Ottawa in November 2002.

One cross-country summit was in Portage LaPrairie in June 2002. Although economic challenges facing rural communities were identified, the majority of policy modifications addressed social policy development issues. The need to reflect rural values, to monitor and respond to human resource needs and to use measures of accountability and success which are appropriate for rural communities were identified. Canadians, particularly those in rural Canada, responded to Canada’s Innovation Strategy, by stressing how important social policy was for any economic policy to succeed (Industry Canada 2003c).

At the National Summit in November 2002 (documented in Industry Canada 2002), more than 500 people from across Canada prioritized a list of strategic recommendations based on input received through submissions and regional sessions. Of the 18 priority recommendations, six included specific reference to rural communities, recognizing the importance of a concept of innovation as being inclusive and accessible to all Canadians. In addition, increasing the participation of women was identified as one of the priorities.

Rural participants named the lack of physical and social infrastructures as a major barrier to the participation of rural communities in the new economy. Respondents called for greater priority to be given to roads, schools and hospitals, the basic infrastructures that limit the participation of rural Canadians in the new economy. A common theme was the need to promote social inclusion in Canada’s Innovation Strategy. Respondents commented that social innovation should not be the “poor cousin” of economic innovation but rather that an inclusive society is a necessary prerequisite for economic development.

In the summary of the National Summit, there is no ambiguity about an inclusive approach to innovation and the new economy in economic policy.

An innovative society is an inclusive society. It embraces the hopes of all of its members. It welcomes newcomers. It supports the dreams of Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities. It invests in innovation in rural areas. It ensures women can succeed at the highest levels of society. It values diversity (Industry Canada 2003: 66).

### ***The Reality of Rurality and Gender***

How is this conceptualization of inclusion of women and rurality in economic policy

translated in Canada's Innovation Strategy priorities, targets, implementation action items and progress measures? An examination of targets in the strategy reveals a failure to attend to rurality or women. An application of basic arithmetic to the 47 goals, targets and federal priorities of *Achieving Excellence* reveals only two include references to a rural context, and there are no direct references to the inclusion of women or to inclusion in general (Industry Canada 2001: 6-13). There appears to be a disjuncture between inclusion as originally articulated in the strategy and as defined by the federal priorities outlined within the policy itself. There is an illusion of inclusion.

We learned about a number of ways in which rural Nova Scotia was excluded from much of the federal funding developed to support new economy initiatives. Despite the articulation in public forums of the particular needs of rural Canada, in our interviews we heard concerns that an urban bias exists in the federal government. This bias has resulted in economic development policies and programs that do not necessarily meet the needs of rural Nova Scotia. One person we consulted said:

*One size doesn't fit all and there's a need to respond differently in appropriate ways to rural communities.*

In another interview, we heard that despite the number of regional and national summit sessions, Canada's Innovation Strategy remains centrally driven with very limited meaningful input from the regions.

We also learned the concept of "rural" is defined by some government programs in very narrow terms, associated primarily with agriculture. Thus, many economic development initiatives and programs for rural areas are limited to farming and other agricultural issues. In Chapter 2, we described the federal government's rural lens, developed to address this problem, although we heard and read evidence that pointed to its under-utilization in Nova Scotia. Those we consulted expressed concern that there is little reference to the participation of rural communities in resource industries or to the potential for the use of innovative technologies and increased participation of resource industries in the new economy. There is little attention paid to these in the priorities and targets or in accountability measures. On the question of the participation of rural women, one interviewee told us:

*It's a question of broad, rural access, and women aren't targeted.*

We heard that Industry Canada's investments through *Achieving Excellence* are largely allocated to university research and post-graduate students and, therefore, primarily urban centred. Their rural programs focus on connectivity, but the participation of women is not specifically targeted. Programs from HRSDC focus on the more social components of economic development. There is no evidence of a mechanism for the systemic analysis of gaps and contradictions in the social development programs of *Knowledge Matters* and the economic development initiatives of *Achieving Excellence*.

### ***Measuring the Outcomes***

Accountability measures are a good indication of what will drive programs that derive

from broad policies and strategies; they also provide an indication of what is valued. The accountability measures identified in Canada's Innovation Strategy are the basis on which data will be collected to determine progress on innovation in Canada. There is much debate nationally and internationally on the use of indicators as a measure of economic and social progress. According to the Genuine Progress Index (GPI), the measures we use to indicate progress are an indication of what we value (Colman 1999), but what do the proposed accountability measures tell us about what is valued in the strategy?

*Achieving Excellence* (Industry Canada 2001: 18) reports: "Canada has significantly improved its innovation performance over the last few years across a range of key indicators." This innovation performance was measured by collecting data on external patent applications, human capital devoted to research and development, business-funded expenditure on research and development, and research and development intensity.

Industry Canada identified 15 measurable targets. Although it can be argued that the targets are broadly stated, the majority reflect strictly economic indicators. There is no indication that gender-disaggregated data will be collected, making it virtually impossible to analyze the impact of Canada's Innovation Strategy on rural women. Only three targets can be interpreted to involve social development or a rural context (Industry Canada 2003a).

- Target 5: Over the next five years, increase the number of adults pursuing learning opportunities by one million.
- Target 14: By 2010, significantly improve the innovation performance of communities across Canada.
- Target 15: By 2005, ensure that high-speed broadband access is widely available to Canadian communities.

### **Other Federal Policies, Programs and Strategies**

In addition to *Canada's Innovation Strategy*, other federal government policies have an impact on the participation of rural women in the new economy in Nova Scotia.

The Smart Communities Program is a three-year federal program, created and administered by Industry Canada to help Canada become "a world leader in the development and use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for economic, social and cultural development." A smart community is defined as "a community with a vision of the future that involves the use of information and communication technologies in new and innovative ways to empower its residents, institutions and regions as a whole" (Industry Canada 2003c: 1).

The Smart Communities Program is one component of the Government of Canada's Connecting Canadians initiative and incorporates the advice of the Panel on Smart Communities, established by the Prime Minister in June 1998. Twelve "world-class" smart communities across Canada were selected to become demonstration projects — each receiving program funding to support their smart community vision. Priority is given to First

Nation, northern, rural and remote communities. Although they are separate programs, the Smart Communities Program was originally associated with Industry Canada's Broadband for Rural and Northern Development (BRAND) Pilot Program that provides funding to bring publicly available broadband access to Canadian communities.

In Nova Scotia, the Smart Communities Program is present through the Western Valley Development Authority's Fundy Web Smart Community Project that has designed a number of community-based initiatives with an ICT focus. For example, the Fundy Web Project delivered a two-year e-business program for small- and medium-sized enterprises and presented numerous e-business seminars and workshops. Most demonstration projects are winding down. Although the Smart Communities Program has met some of the needs of rural communities, we have seen no indication that gender has been embedded in the policies from which this program grew.

The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency is a Government of Canada agency whose mission is "to work in partnership with the people of Atlantic Canada to improve the economy of our communities through the successful development of business and employment opportunities" (ACOA 2003a: 1). Created in 1987, ACOA's key objectives are to build a stronger Atlantic economy by:

- improving the growth and competitiveness of Atlantic enterprises;
- helping rural communities become more economically self-reliant; and
- influencing and co-ordinating national policies and investments that affect economic growth in Atlantic Canada.

The Agency's six strategic priority areas are policy, advocacy and co-ordination, innovation and technology, trade, tourism and investment, entrepreneurship and business skills development, community economic development, and access to capital.

Through ACOA's programs, such as the Business Development Program, Canadian Business Service Centres, Young Entrepreneurs Development Initiative, the Innovation Skills Development Initiative and Community Business Development Corporations, the Agency provides support to businesses in Atlantic Canada.

As an example, the Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs) are a network of 13 autonomous, not-for-profit companies designed to meet the needs of small business in Nova Scotia. According to the 2000 Annual Review, the CBDCs assisted 398 businesses for a total of \$11.5 million, involving more than 5,000 clients. Although the CBDCs are mandated to work with both women and men, there is no attention specifically to women in CBDC policies and program guidelines. Unfortunately, the lack of gender-disaggregated data has meant a gender analysis of the differential impact of CBDCs on women and men is not possible (CBDC 2000). Organizations that pay attention to gender reflect this commitment in all aspects of their service delivery from the composition of their decision-making board through to their staff hiring and training, their communications and promotional materials, their financing programs, and the collection of comprehensive gender and diversity data that

determine the effectiveness of their programs. For example, an evaluation of CBDCs prepared by Goss Gilroy Inc. (2003) for ACOA stated: “[M]any CBDCs are governed by boards where female, youth and minority representation is poor. This raised concerns among some stakeholders who felt that the boards should be more representative of the community.” We learned though our consultations that women as a designated group are not embedded in ACOA policy, nor is gender-disaggregated data collected in programs to measure the differential impacts and benefits of programs on men and women. Although ACOA supports and commissions surveys and evaluations of its programs, there is no policy requirement to attend to gender equity, and it is left to the discretion of ACOA-funded organizations whether they do so or not. Gender equity must be valued as a principle by ACOA, in its policies and resultant programs.

### *Atlantic Investment Partnership*

One major program ACOA administers is the Atlantic Investment Partnership (AIP). In June 2000, the Government of Canada introduced the Atlantic Investment Partnership to help the Atlantic region benefit more directly from, and overcome the challenges associated with, the knowledge-based economy. The AIP’s priorities of innovation, community economic development, entrepreneurship and business skills development, and trade build on ACOA’s existing programs. This five-year, \$700 million initiative includes four components administered by ACOA which include the following (ACOA 2004).

- The Atlantic Innovation Fund received \$300 million to strengthen innovation capacity, increase the region’s competitiveness and encourage the region’s transition to a more knowledge-based economy.
- In September 2003, projects totalling \$47.6 million were announced for Nova Scotia of which about 45 percent was awarded to post-secondary education institutions for research activities, 36 percent to commercial activities in urban centres and 19 percent to commercial activities in rural areas.
- The National Research Council received \$110 million to expand facilities in Atlantic Canada.
- The Strategic Community Investment Fund received \$135 million to improve access to funding for strategic community-level projects.
- A total of \$123.6 million went to trade and investment, including \$59.6 million for entrepreneurship and business skills development initiatives.

This last component is the only one that has a program developed specifically for women. The Women in Business Initiative (WBI) is a three-year, \$17 million initiative which became operational in late 2003. It represents only 2.4 percent of the total AIP. Nova Scotia’s share is \$4.24 million.

The purpose of the WBI is to improve growth and competitiveness of women-owned businesses and their greater representation in Atlantic Canada’s emerging growth sectors. The key objectives of the WBI are to:

- strengthen management capabilities and business development skills of women-owned businesses;
- improve access to capital and business support services for the start-up and growth of women-owned businesses; and
- increase the involvement of women-owned businesses selling in international markets and in knowledge-based industries (ACOA nd).

The WBI includes six key components: advocacy and co-ordination, business counselling and outreach, business management skills development, consultant advisory services, access to financing, and exposure to exporting and innovation.

This is the first program ACOA has launched for women entrepreneurs. It has been designed to support women in rural and urban committees in Atlantic Canada to develop and grow their businesses. Through conferences, networking events and information materials, ACOA has provided some support specifically for women in business over the years. The WBI has positive elements, such as five regional business facilitators working in rural Nova Scotia providing business advice and support to women business owners, and linking them to existing agencies such as the CBDCs for training support and financing.

There are key concerns. The WBI is a pilot project. Without a gender equity policy and a commitment to ensure long-term targeted programs for women, the WBI will remain a short-term project. As recognized by the European Union, until we achieve gender equity, both targeted and mainstream programming are essential.

One significant function of WBI facilitators is to connect women entrepreneurs to existing organizations for business training, information and loans. For example, the CBDC is a key delivery partner for the WBI's Access to Financing Program. It is interesting to note that of the Nova Scotia women business owners questioned in a 2003 ACOA-commissioned study, only 21 percent had sought financing through a CBDC, and of those, 54 percent were turned down (Calhoun 2003). As well, when seeking advice or business counselling, Nova Scotia businesswomen were far more likely to "approach industry organizations and accountants, compared to the percentage who said they would approach federal government departments and agencies or CBDCs" (Calhoun 2003). There is no indication that the CBDCs have changed in any way to make their services more women positive. When developing the WBI, it may have been more beneficial for ACOA to begin by working with partners, such as the CBDCs, to develop their capacity to undertake gender analysis at their policy and program levels. This would go a long way toward the development and implementation of programs that support gender equity.

As the WBI has been implemented only recently, it was not possible to determine the impact on rural women in Nova Scotia through this study. It appears, however that they have taken some strides to address issues facing women entrepreneurs. Recommendations documented in the recently released report of the Prime Minister's Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs

(Prime Minister 2003) acknowledged the challenges facing women in rural Canada in starting and maintaining businesses. The future of this report is uncertain, given the new prime minister, but common themes and issues were identified through country-wide consultations. These include access to capital, employment benefits and social safety net programs, mentoring programs and networking opportunities, business skills, and training information and government programs. The need for research was also recognized.

Through our review of ACOA's policies and our consultations, we learned gender equity is not a standard policy of the agency. The Agency's role as advocate for Atlantic Canada puts it in an opportune position to address the issues rural women face; however, there is no requirement to include women in its policies or to collect gender-disaggregated data. As stated in the *Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency Act*, ACOA's mandate is to "increase opportunity for economic development in Atlantic Canada and, more particularly, to enhance the growth of earned incomes and employment opportunities in that region" (ACOA 2004a: 7). The Agency's three strategic directions that reflect its mandate include enterprise development, community development and policy, advocacy and co-ordination. The *ACOA 2004-2005 Estimates Part III – Report on Plans and Priorities* outlines priorities under these strategic directions. Under the enterprise development strategic direction there are five areas of programming: innovation, entrepreneurship and business skills development, trade and investment, tourism or other support to small- and medium-sized enterprises. The WBI is only identified under the entrepreneurship and business skills development program, and women are not mentioned under any of the others. Under the community development strategic direction, there is only one reference to women specifically related to improved access to financing for women entrepreneurs through the WBI. During our consultations, it was clearly stated that entrepreneurship and community development are the key strategies of the Agency, and if the Agency identifies a need to focus on women through its research, it will develop a program. Women are not found specifically in policy. People spoke about "value added" as being an important criterion when decisions about programs are made, and linked it to the concept of "best business" and "best returns." This approach assumes that "best" is gender neutral, and gender is not a factor to be considered in general programming. The theory is that general policies and programs are equally accessible to women and men, implying this approach results in equity across a range of policies and programs, with women having equal access and opportunity. Where there are equity issues, special programs are designed to fill the gap. It is difficult to determine the validity of these assumptions in the absence of appropriate accountability measures or the collection of gender-disaggregated data.

### **Federal Policy: Monitoring Impacts on Women**

Throughout our analysis of federal economic policy, it became clear there is a failure to monitor the differential impacts of policy on men and women and, specifically, on rural women. The federal government has two programs to monitor gender equity in employment: the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and Federal Contractors Program (FCP). Under LEEP, all federally regulated employers with 100 or more employees are subject to the *Employment Equity Act* as are all federal government departments. Under the

FCP, employers with 100 or more employees, who have secured a federal goods or services contract of \$200,000 or more, are required to sign a certificate of commitment to fulfill their mandated goals of implementing employment equity in their workplace. Between LEEP and FCP, about 2,000,000 employees are affected. However, in rural areas, where micro-, small- and medium-sized businesses are most prevalent, few employers have 100 or more employees and so LEEP and FCP rarely apply.

Research suggests that LEEP and FCP function with only minimal effect, and have little impact on rural communities and small businesses. In 1998, a report entitled *Women in Technical Work in Atlantic Canada* indicated clearly that LEEP and FCP are not effective in ensuring the employment of women on publicly funded projects (Grzetic 1998). Reinforcing this, in 2003, HRDC reported that only about 10 percent of employers were fully implementing FCP measures and, on average, the employer implementation rate was about 50 percent. Strategies to ensure FCP compliance were reported to be poor and enforcement was found to be generally non-existent and “toothless” (HRDC 2002a).

Given both the narrow purview of LEEP and FCP, and their reported ineffectiveness, it becomes central to gender equality that gender indicators and analysis of differential gender impacts be built into core economic policy goals and indicators. Otherwise, there is no way of assessing whether claims for gender equity are indeed being met. The absence of attention to women as a group would suggest that among policy makers, gender is not on the agenda. Yet our research, along with other research, displays the persistence of gender inequities.

If government economic policies are to marshal the skills and creativity of all Canadians, attention must be paid to differential impacts on gender.

Yet, we repeatedly heard in our consultations that the impact of general or broad economic policies and programs on women is not a factor. Women are considered “by default” in general programs. Although some challenges facing rural women are acknowledged (transportation, child and family care, domestic violence), governments have not taken these into consideration in the development of economic policies and programs. The participation of rural women is measured by counting the number of women who are members of boards and volunteer committees, but no other accountability measures seem to be used and gender-disaggregated data are not collected. In one policy consultation we were told:

*We are not accountable for those issues at the regional level.*

Program funding is not tied to the participation of women in economic activities.

### **Nova Scotia Provincial Policies**

The participation of rural women in the new economy is also influenced by provincial government policies, frameworks and strategies.

In 2000, the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development released *Opportunities for Prosperity: A New Economic Growth Strategy for Nova Scotians*. Like Canada’s Innovation



Strategy, the language of the policy framework addresses equity and inclusion. The document describes an approach to economic development that is “transparent, fiscally and socially responsible, economically, socially and environmentally sustainable, consistent, inclusive and equitable” (NS Economic Development 2000: 3).

In *Including Women: Comments on Toward Prosperity — A Discussion Paper on Developing an Economic Growth Strategy for Nova Scotia*, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (NSACSW) stressed the importance of developing strategies “inclusive of women’s expectations...reflect[ing] the diversity of women’s interests and realities. This includes those of Aboriginal women, Black women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, low income women, single mothers, young women, older women, and rural women” (NSACSW 2000: 1).

Seven strategic directions have been identified in *Opportunities for Prosperity*, each of which includes a series of issues and actions/next steps. A close examination reveals that references, either direct or indirect, to the inclusion of rural women are found in only two of the strategic directions. One issue is barriers/inclusion, containing an action to “identify barriers that impede participation in economic development by women, Aboriginal people, visible minorities and people with disabilities, and aggressively tackle those where government has influence”(NS Economic Development 2000: 17).

Another issue is identified as communities of interest, with the action to “tackle those barriers that impede participation in economic development by communities with shared concerns”(NS Economic Development 2000: 21). Specific reference is made to persons with disabilities, visible minorities and members of Mi’kmaq communities. Women are not included as a community of interest or as a community with shared concerns.

It is interesting to note that when *Opportunities for Prosperity* talks about vital economic sectors, rural Nova Scotia is specifically mentioned in connection with agriculture. “Agriculture is a solid foundation of the province’s rural economy where it is a major employer”(NS Economic Development 2000: 24), but not when other components of the new economy are discussed.

The issues and actions, carefully laid out in the main *Opportunities for Prosperity* document, are not always reflected in the subsequent progress report (NS Economic Development 2003) making it difficult to determine actual progress. For example, the issue of barriers/inclusion in the original document is not mentioned in *A Progress Report*. Progress on some initiatives in rural Nova Scotia has been reported, but there is no indication the participation of women was considered. Nova Scotia’s communities of interest have been expanded to include the Acadian community, but women are still not mentioned. Plans for the immediate future are outlined, but reference to the participation of rural women in economic development is excluded.

The NSACSW made a number of recommendations including the need for the next phase of this work to elucidate the linkages between economic and social development and with the purpose of developing a social policy framework for Nova Scotia. Despite the input and strong recommendation from the NSACSW, there does not yet exist a social policy framework (NSACSW 2000).

## Other Nova Scotia Policies, Programs and Strategies

### *Regional Development Authorities*

In 1994, the Community Economic Development Program of the Canada/Nova Scotia Cooperation Agreement on Economic Diversification established 13 regional development authorities (RDAs). Based on the *Regional Community Development Act*, RDAs were funded to co-ordinate economic development at the local level. The approach is based on regional leadership in the core areas of CED, community enterprise development, and business, human resources and communications development. Each RDA prepares its own development plan and is governed by a board of directors composed of community, private sector and municipal representatives. Funded jointly by ACOA, the Nova Scotia Office of Economic Development and municipal governments, the majority of RDAs are operating in rural regions across the province. But the inclusion of rural in the RDAs does not ensure the inclusion of gender. In fact, the RDAs are not required to have gender-equity policies or programs and, therefore, it is left to the goodwill of a particular organization whether they choose to be more gender inclusive. If the RDAs had gender equity policies, their programs would be more responsive to the needs of rural women.

Through our consultations with service providers and policy officials, we were informed the RDAs are not required to focus on gender. We were told that when gender issues are considered by individual RDAs, it is due to the attitudes and values of RDA staff, not due to RDA guidelines or policies. We were also told there are no policies or accountability measures in place to determine the impact of RDA activities on women. One person we consulted said:

*We are not accountable for those issues at the regional level.*

In another of our consultations we asked whether RDAs were encouraged to attend to gender. We were told:

*They tried to make sure that RDAs had women on their boards, but...no, we haven't tied the need to consider women to funding...we've paid more attention to rural than we have to the gender issues.*

Program funding is not tied to the participation of women in economic development activities. Yet the RDAs remain the primary vehicles for the delivery of federal and provincial community economic development programs in Nova Scotia. This failure to build gender strategies into RDA processes is consequential for women-centred CED, which is the approach we propose in Chapter 7 as the most appropriate for increasing rural women's participation in the new economy.

### *Innovative Nova Scotia*

In 2003, the Government of Nova Scotia released the policy, Innovative Nova Scotia, with the goal to "grow and expand the use of knowledge-based innovation to levels that match or

exceed those found in the leading regions of the nation” (NS Economic Development 2003b: 1). The policy will be implemented in three stages. An analysis of initiatives in Stage 1 reveals they are designed, almost entirely, to support the development and growth of high-knowledge intensive industries and enterprises in urban centres. Even the human resource development policies (where women are traditionally included) contain only one reference to a rural context and no direct or even indirect reference to initiatives that would speak to the participation of rural women. Innovative Nova Scotia clearly presents innovation as being an urban phenomenon.

Innovative Nova Scotia will be developing accountability measures relevant to the policy and, therefore, one assumes, to an urban, high-knowledge intensive concept of innovation. A set of indicators will be prepared in conjunction with the development of indicators for Canada’s Innovation Strategy. It seems unlikely that rural women will figure in the accountability measures.

### ***Nova Scotia Business Inc.***

In 2001, the Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development was restructured and Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI), a provincial Crown corporation, was created. A private-sector led business development agency, it concentrates on business attraction, trade promotion, lending and finance, and business retention and expansion. In 2003, the NSBI authorized \$13.6 million to be invested in 17 companies (NS Business Inc. 2003: 14). An examination of the strategies and tactics reveals an emphasis on large businesses and export. The NSBI appears to be another example of the trend to consider the new economy as one that focuses on export. It is unlikely to support micro-businesses which, as discussed in chapters 3 and 7, are the predominant approach to entrepreneurship for rural women. On the issue of measuring performance, the 2003 Nova Scotia Business Inc. *Annual Report*, cited progress made on 12 measures none of which include social indicators or make any reference to the participation of rural communities or rural women (NS Business Inc. 2003: 4).

### **Alternative Monitoring and Accountability Measures**

Measuring sustainability and quality of life was identified as a strategic goal during the Rio Summit on Sustainable Development in 1992, and the need for appropriate measures of progress has now become universally acknowledged. Since 1992, numerous initiatives have balanced the measure of economic development with measurement of social development and quality of life, and many approaches to measuring the impacts of social policies have been developed.

The Council of the European Union measures progress toward the elimination of poverty and social exclusion across European Union states. Eighteen primary and secondary indicators have been identified including social outcomes such as rates and persistence of low income, life expectancy, health status, and long-term unemployment (Council of the European Union 2001). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the New Economics Foundation has challenged the commonly accepted tradition that GDP is a good indicator of a society’s well-being. It has introduced an alternative indicator, The Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare. The basic principle behind the index is “What gets counted, counts” (New

Economics Foundation 2003).

In the United States, Redefining Progress is an organization that developed the Genuine Progress Index (GPI), identifying indicators to measure not only economic outcomes of policies and programs but social outcomes as well. “As a measure of economic health, the GDP is badly flawed. First by counting only monetary transactions as economic activity, the GDP omits much of what people value and activities that serve basic needs” (Cobb et al.: 1999).

GPI Atlantic has applied the GPI to Nova Scotia. In addressing the question of the need for an alternative to a GDP-based index, GPI Atlantic is clear.

The things we measure and count — quite literally — tell us what we value as a society. If we do not count non-monetary and non-material assets, we effectively discount and devalue them. And what we don’t measure and value in our central accounting mechanism will be effectively sidelined in the policy arena (Colman 2001: 3).

Ron Colman at GPI Atlantic suggests we have been misled by using the GDP as a measure of progress and have been hooked on an illusion of economic growth that will continue until we stop measuring improvement on the basis of how fast the economy is growing. GPI Atlantic recognizes that any progress index is value based, including the use of measures based on the GDP as indicators of progress. “[T]he Genuine Progress Index measures 20 social, economic, and environmental sets of indicators to assess how we are really doing as a society” (Colman 1999a: 9).

These four examples of formulations for measuring growth fully recognize the inter-linkages among social, environmental and economic development. They present examples of the linkages in actual accountability measures. The work has been done to assist governments in developing better measures of accountability that would lead to attention being paid to social issues within an economic development strategy. The Government of Canada, however, in its economic development accountability measures, demonstrates its solid entrenchment in a traditional model of economic development.

### **Key Summary Points**

- An examination of implementation priorities and accountability measures in both federal and Nova Scotia economic policies and programs reveals that measures of success are based on jobs, wealth creation, values competitiveness and growth, not on broader measures that include social and environmental accountability.
- Federal and Nova Scotia economic policies for the new economy primarily support the development and growth of knowledge-intensive enterprises in urban areas. Strategies and accountability frameworks stress innovation, research and development, and technology transfer — activities connected with large urban areas of Nova Scotia and a few towns. Rural policies mention connectivity, provide some support for rural small businesses and support rural CED through the RDAs.

- With the exception of special initiatives, gender is not included in the criteria for funding, and programs arising from economic development policies are open to everyone, with no attention to strategies to ensure women are able to participate. In those policies or programs designed for women (e.g., ACOA's Women in Business), there is no evidence that the impact on women living in rural areas has been considered. Likewise in the programs designed for rural communities (e.g., RDAs) there is no evidence that the differential impact of the programs on men and women has been considered. It does not appear that a gender analysis has been conducted in any economic policies examined.
- To determine the impact of economic policies on women, gender-disaggregated data are needed to track differential impacts of policies and programs. The data need to be further disaggregated to identify impacts on rural women, African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women. These data are not available, making detailed analysis impossible.

There are deep flaws in federal and provincial policies. The conventional model of economics being used by the federal government and by the Nova Scotia provincial government is not inclusive of women. The current model fails to recognize the social and economic benefits of women's participation or to identify and support processes necessary for enhancing their opportunities. When reference to the participation of women is absent from the broad policies, strategies, action plans and accountability measures, the inclusion of rural women becomes a negotiation at a program delivery level. A different framework for the development of economic policies is needed to ensure the participation of rural women in the new economy. We explore this in Chapter 7 in our examination of women's entrepreneurship and women-centred CED. But first we turn to education and training, and examine the array of issues that must be considered to address the challenges facing rural women in Nova Scotia who wish further training to access jobs in the new economy.

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training policies are at the core of many national and international documents on the knowledge-based economy. Training is seen as essential for developing skilled workers who can adapt easily to new technologies and changing job requirements.<sup>1</sup> Policy initiatives express common goals and strategies:

- creating a “culture committed to learning,” a focus on lifelong learning through home, school, community and workplace;
- involving partnerships among schools, government, business and community organizations; and
- aiming to co-ordinate policies across a wide range of policy domains, linking labour market policy and educational policy, involving departments and agencies concerned with youth, seniors, human resource development, jobs, health, social welfare and crime prevention.

Yet, at the same time as these themes infuse policy documents, many federal, provincial and municipal actions have eroded the capacity for lifelong education in rural areas, at many stages along the education continuum. In Chapter 4 we described the massive changes to social security and employment policies of the federal government, which resulted in the exclusion of many women, and we alluded to some impacts on training. In general, the cuts have been devastating. McFarland (2003) argued that the biggest barrier to women’s access to training lies in the lack of government sponsorship.

### **Policy Directions**

What would it mean in rural areas to provide support and mechanisms for more women to be involved in lifelong learning? What elements would characterize industry, government, community partnerships responsive to women’s needs? What education and training strategies are needed to move from illusion to inclusion to facilitate rural women’s entry into jobs in the new economy? Four policy directions repeatedly surfaced in our research.

- Provide financial and social supports for women’s training.
- Support community infrastructures for training.
- Establish gender accountability mechanisms in funding criteria.
- Build gender equity outcome criteria into partnership agreements.

### ***Financial and Social Supports***

In Canada, gender still makes a difference, socially and economically. This is fundamentally related to the way unpaid labour continues to be organized in the household. In terms of unpaid labour, Nova Scotia women still perform more of the child care, elder care and domestic duties than do men (Colman 1998). This unequal division of household labour

underlies women's greater likelihood to work part time and to take time out of the labour force. This translates into less economic security during wage-earning years and in pensionable years, and affects women's eligibility for many benefits under EI regulations.

For more than 25 years, gender advocacy groups have pointed out that in the face of poverty rates among women, certain costs need to be considered when planning upgrading and skills training programs or making educational programs in post-secondary institutions accessible to women. These costs include child care, transportation, student fees and, in the current setting, ready access to computers with advanced software and access to the Internet. The need for policies and programs to ensure such financing is as great now as it ever was. Yet, research on women and education/training demonstrates these continue to be barriers. It appears the case for including such supports in programs needs to be made repeatedly, despite the government's own evidence that programs which take these social needs into account are more successful in attracting and retaining women. This especially applies to women most marginalized by poverty and low skill levels and results in a transition into the labour force over the long term (Lord and Martell 2004).

The need for these financial and social supports arises at each phase in the continuum of education. These have been stressed in report after report to federal, provincial and municipal governments.

### ***Community Infrastructure***

For more than two decades women's centres and women's equality-seeking organizations (such as the Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women) and other community-based organizations) have been at the forefront of providing accessible programs for rural women who need skills training and counselling programs as they negotiate entry or re-entry into the labour market. Since the mid-1990s, these organizations have faced precarious funding environments, with no core funding and only short-term project funding. Many have had to close or reduce their programs and release experienced staff. In rural areas, these community-based organizations are needed to provide women-specific training initiatives linked to social and economic development. To engage in this, women's community learning and economic development organizations need long-term core funding for the organization and multi-year project funding.

### ***Accountability Mechanisms***

Another issue that has emerged repeatedly in our analysis is the need at every level for accountability mechanisms to ensure gender equity concerns are addressed in processes of policy formulation and implementation. Nova Scotia's *Skills Nova Scotia: Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan*, for example, asserts accountability "can be achieved by assigning clear objectives and expected levels of performance, identifying roles and responsibilities of each partner, balancing expectations with capacities, developing ways to measure performance, and reporting regularly and clearly" (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002: 13). As we saw in Chapter 5, there is little evidence that in these aspects of accountability, gender and rurality indicators are

included. There is a need for gender accountability mechanisms in all jurisdictions, including education and training.

Several times in this report we have pointed to the need for gender-disaggregated data. Without careful data collection in all programs, there can be no adequate measurement of the impact of policies on women. Failure to do so amounts to passive discrimination (Rees 1998). Monitoring is the only way to identify patterns of outputs.

Further, gender-sensitive strategies are not going to be attended to in any widespread way until gender outcomes are specified in project outcome criteria. Many organizations and corporations applying for funding are not going to implement gender-sensitive strategies unless a requirement for it is built into funding criteria. Gender equity in programming in a society where inequality is shaped by gender, race and class differences requires more than a claim (which we heard from several policy makers) that the program is “open to all.” Gender-sensitive strategies arise through examining the proposed activity, first asking what structural barriers might impede women’s access, and second, designing and implementing measures to remove or alleviate the barriers. To refuse to attend to structural barriers is to maintain gender inequities. Such action ensures equal access does not exist.

So, throughout this chapter, we point to ways federal and provincial policies and programs could integrate equality mechanisms and structures, particularly around accountability, data collection, outcome measures and funding criteria.

### ***Partnerships***

One obvious place for such gender equity mechanisms to be implemented is in the various partnership initiatives for economic development and training. International, national and provincial reports, whether from the perspective of government, community groups or business, have a similar theme: working in partnership across sectors and jurisdictions. Policy analyses from the Government of Nova Scotia, ACOA and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business speak of the importance of training partnership agreements with post-secondary institutions<sup>2</sup> and businesses.<sup>3</sup>

Accountability is a central policy issue here. In partnerships, not all partners are governed by similar commitments to gender equity, and few, other than federal government departments, actually have policies with which they must comply. There is a need to investigate training partnerships and discover what the accountability criteria are, scrutinizing these in regard to gender. For example, in certain Nova Scotia initiatives (Construction Trades Skills Initiatives and Older Worker Pilot Project Initiative), the public documentation gives no gender breakdown. We do not know whether such a breakdown exists, or whether, in negotiating partnerships, partners are required to pay attention to either gender or rurality. Our analysis of the *Nova Scotia Skills Framework and Action Plan* (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002) suggests that this may not be the case. It sets out responsibilities for partnerships and footnotes the requirement that individual businesses and training providers must assess skills and respond to changing skills, but there is no mention of a responsibility to attend to equity issues. Brenda Grzetic (1998: 21), in her report, *Women in Technical Work in Atlantic Canada*, says:



This research proves that if project policies and agreements to construct mega-projects do not allow for a gender-based analysis and allocate training and employment opportunities for women, employers alone in the construction and oil and gas industry will not ensure a place for women. Governments must recognize that when they sign agreements for these projects without ensuring training and employment guarantees for women, they are perpetuating the discriminatory practices that have historically kept women relegated to a few low-paying, low-status occupations — and women's disadvantaged position in society.

### **The Education and Training Context**

Effective education and training strategies for women living in rural areas rely on four key elements.

First, for education and training strategies to translate into secure employment for women living in rural areas, strong economic and social development policies must be in place. These policies must recognize the range of ruralities and the strength of rural capacities. In Chapter 7, we discuss key policy strategies for rural development that take into account the range of ruralities and the strength of rural capacities that can be marshalled through effective CED initiatives.

Second, education and training has to occur in a context that takes into account the character of the new economy in rural Nova Scotia and works with a wide definition of knowledge-economy jobs. As we saw in Chapter 2, in rural Nova Scotia, small businesses predominate and there is a rural–urban gap in knowledge-based industries and occupations. Policy questions regarding training needs for rural women have to take into account the current reality of job possibilities in the new economy, at the same time as long-term economic development strategies support an increase of new economy enterprises in rural areas. In this, as we have argued, it is necessary to work with a broad definition of new economy. This means moving beyond assumptions that the main labour requirements are in science and engineering, particularly computer technology and, in the Nova Scotia context, biotechnologies. Attracting women to this broad range of occupational possibilities is one opportunity in the knowledge-based economy.

Third, education and training strategies must be conceptualized and implemented in ways that do not generate a widening gap between skilled and less skilled workers (and thus widen the rich–poor divide). The *Employment, Skills and the Knowledge Economy in Atlantic Canada* (Beaudin and Breau 2001:117-118) report quotes Lester Thorow as arguing that “skills and education in the lower two-thirds of the labour force are just as important as the skills and education in the upper third.” The report goes on to summarize another study.

In their report on training in the new economy, Betcherman *et al.* argue that a particular segment of Canada's labour force — largely composed of people who already have substantial human capital — is well-served by the current

state of affairs. More specifically, they stress that this group finds itself in a *virtuous circle* of a strong skills base, challenging job requirement, and additional capital investments. However, too many Canadians, including many young people, are in a more *vicious circle* of skills deficits, underinvestment, and declining employability. If Canada is to avoid creating an underclass of poorly educated people, it will have to give more serious attention to the distribution of training (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 117).

In the absence of explicit policy directives regarding the needs of those with lower levels of employability, most major corporate and government training efforts are directed to higher skill levels, with the long-term effect of an increasingly polarized labour market. Policy and strategic action plans must attend to the “urgency of implementing efficient lifelong training strategies for everyone” (Beaudin and Breau 2001: 116). Training and education initiatives must be accessible to all.

Finally, policies must ensure that support, income and services for education are available at multiple entry points along a continuum. Rural women’s educational backgrounds locate them across a spectrum, from women holding post-secondary degrees to women without a general education diploma. Training and educational needs are broad. To facilitate rural women’s access to jobs in the new economy, support, income and services for education must be available at multiple entry points along a continuum. A woman with some post-secondary education who wants to start a small new economy business in her rural community has differing educational needs from a woman employed in a clerical job who would like access to on-the-job training to allow her to advance to a better-paying job requiring higher technological skills. And, both women differ from the woman who has been out of the labour force for a while and wishes to return to a community college to develop skills in technology-related fields, or a woman on low income who needs to complete adult upgrading in preparation for initial entry into the labour market.

Over the past decade in Nova Scotia, much of the community-based infrastructure that supports women’s learning and training has been eroded, particularly for women with lower skill levels. Our discussion in Chapter 4 of changes to funding and declining educational and training infrastructure in rural areas speaks most starkly to the failure to meet the needs of women at the beginning of the continuum, women with low incomes or on social assistance, with low skill levels, as well as women returning after an absence from the labour force. Other parts of this chapter address policy issues related to training and education needs of women at other stages along the continuum.

### ***Provincial Policy***

We have mentioned several policy documents that relate to education and training in previous sections, including EI legislation and HRDC’s *Knowledge Matters*. One further framework, central at the provincial level, is the *Skills Nova Scotia Framework* (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002). The report sets out key principles intended to guide the province’s efforts to develop Nova Scotia’s capacity to compete in the global economy through developing the skills of its

current and future labour force. In addition to setting out key principles, the document also itemized the specific action plans for 2002 and 2003.

The Framework sets out key elements and principles: partnership, strategic co-ordination, capacity building, information, accountability and inclusion. There are only two places in the framework section that mention women or gender:

- in a discussion of apprenticeships and trades: “The benefits of trades and apprenticeship training must be marketed to create positive images among our male and female youth” (p. 10); and
- in an elaboration of inclusion, there is one statement regarding women: “We will ensure that Skills Nova Scotia is inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians, including immigrants, youth, women, African Nova Scotians, Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities and/or low incomes”(p.14).

Also under the inclusion element is one statement regarding rural. “We are sensitive to the needs of rural Nova Scotia and recognize that we are stronger when we build capacity in individuals and communities throughout the province” (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002: 14).

Attention to equity groups seems to only appear under the inclusion element.

In the action plans meant to serve as a way of making the Framework actionable, women are seldom mentioned; but when mentioned, it is either in the context of apprenticeable trades and technologies or in terms of projects undertaken by independent researchers and not-for-profit groups such as Hypatia, the Women’s CED Network and the Maritime Centre for Women’s Health. In many instances, these are single projects, one time only and not provincially funded.

### **Basic Education/Adult High Schools**

For some women in rural Nova Scotia, there is a need for basic upgrading before entering training for a job in the new economy. These women are likely to be low-income, income-assistance recipients, new entrants or re-entry women, and women in low-paying and seasonal jobs.

The withdrawal of school boards from local provisioning of adult education and cuts in funding to the voluntary and non-profit sector have eroded the rural infrastructure for community-based adult education programs in literacy and adult high school. The N.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), offers a high school graduation program, and we heard in our consultations that this program needs to be offered at off-site locations to meet the needs of women in communities at a distance from the community college. Budget constraints at the provincial level force decisions to offer basic education programs where there are likely to be large numbers. One senior policy maker we consulted asked:

*Where do you put scarce dollars — in a literacy program in Sydney where 400 are on waiting list or in Guysborough where there are seven on the list?*

Beyond the provincial delivery of the adult high school diploma, for women on low income or social assistance, there is a need for long-term training and support strategies to facilitate the transition to steady employment with decent wages in the new economy. Bridging programs are key here.

### **Bridging Programs**

A central policy direction that appeared to be repeated in the literature we reviewed and in our consultations with service providers is the need to support, in a long-term systematic way, bridging projects that specifically target women for upgrading and training.

The re-establishment of support for bridging programs for women should build on expertise developed through the 1980s regarding best practices in women-only programming. Those bridging programs provided a wide range of support services including skills training, upgrading, counselling, life skills, job search techniques and basic computer literacy. Such programs should ensure key support services are provided (child care, transportation, health benefits). National and international evidence suggests these measures are vital, particularly for women returning to the labour market and for those with disadvantages to reintegrate into the labour market (Lochhead and Scott 2000; Rees 1998). A report on women's training in the European Union says that the years of experience offering women's bridging programs suggest that best practices include "guidance and counselling, confidence building, developing direct links with labour market, improving knowledge of labour market information, training in job-seeking, child-care, family-friendly hours" (Rees 1998: 158). A recent report from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Lord and Martell 2004) reiterated the urgent need to establish transitional bridging programs.

Evidence suggests that the process of moving from social assistance, or from a situation of low-paying seasonal or part-time work, through upgrading and training, into steady well-paying jobs takes several years. Provincial and federal policies should encourage proposals for multi-year bridging programs. Further, bridging programs need to be offered in local rural settings and draw on local expertise that exists in women's organizations such as women's centres, women's learning networks and women's community economic development. Policy initiatives to rebuild a sustainable community-based training infrastructure are needed. In relation to new economy and rural economic development, economic and social policies should support and encourage proposals that link bridging programs for women to job creation strategies in the local community, within a CED model.

### **Community Colleges**

Nova Scotia has a community college system with 13 campuses across the province, three located in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The Nova Scotia government, which governs

the community college system, set a goal in its Framework document (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002) to increase the proportion of students attending the NSCC.

Geographic disparities in provision exist because the NSCC is only able to provide some programs province-wide. Other programs are offered only in one or two locations. For many women, especially re-entry women, this precludes enrolment, because it is difficult to leave their families and travel to distant locations for study. “Most of the NS Community College campuses are rurally based with large catchment areas. Unfortunately, public transportation often consists of a bus with a limited schedule that travels down the main highway” (Women’s CED Network 2003: 20). Geographical disparities also mean a higher share of rural teenagers (15 to 19 year olds) leave rural communities than do urban teenagers (Bollman 2001) to pursue post-secondary education. Rural teenagers face additional burdens (economic and social) once they leave their rural community as they must pay for room and board and leave behind their social support systems (Bollman 2001: 15). There is a need for gender-disaggregated data to help us understand the patterns for young rural women.

A recent report on rural Nova Scotia (Harley 2001) stressed that community colleges are best placed to support strengthening rural economies for a knowledge-based economy. But in rural areas, conditions exist which create gender inequities, and these differ depending on the degree of rurality within a college campus catchment area.

### ***Community College Programs: Challenges for Women***

In Nova Scotia, the most recent report analyzing gender equity issues for women seeking training in the community college system, particularly those seeking jobs in science and technology, is from the *The Digital Divide* (Women’s CED Network 2003).<sup>4</sup> Through the project, 20 women were assisted in their entry into various science and technology programs at two NSCC campuses and were supported through one year of their program. The women were in such programs as electronics engineering and information technology. Participatory research throughout the project provided data that led to several recommendations regarding recruitment and retention. While some recommendations relate specifically to internal college practices, others are broader public policy issues. Most are persistent issues that have been detailed in previous studies; the findings confirm that certain material and infrastructure conditions continue to affect the ability of rural women in Nova Scotia to access the training they need to enter into jobs in the new economy.

Issues include the requirement to be registered full time, the need for pre-course math and science upgrading, difficulty accessing computers with the capacity to run the necessary programs, child-care and transportation problems, and funding issues.

Access to computers appears to be a consistent problem for re-entry and low-income students at all program levels. Even basic upgrading courses (such as the NSCC General Arts and Science Program) are delivered using computers, and the expectation is that the student both knows how to use computers and has regular access to a computer loaded with an updated version of Microsoft® Word. In current educational discourse, there is an assumption that on-line learning opens up considerable access to women in locations at a distance from universities and community college. Yet, as we discussed in Chapter 3, there remain many

connectivity issues in rural Nova Scotia which, coupled with the low incomes of many women in rural areas and lack of local public training opportunities, preclude ready access to computers. In previous chapters, we have shown how connectivity, transportation and child-care issues result from inadequate federal and provincial infrastructure in rural areas. But the issues also relate to college policy, and indirectly, to policy of the Nova Scotia Department of Education, since the NSCC system is regulated through that department. The provincial government should collaborate with the community college system to provide quality child care with subsidized spaces at every campus, such as provided at the Bell Road campus. This is an initiative which could also serve to increase the number of affordable child-care spaces in rural areas. The provincial government could encourage the NSCC to develop a policy and action plan to increase the number of programs that can be pursued on a part-time basis. Both of these features would help female students, especially those in rural areas who are upgrading their credentials while raising a young family, and for whom day care, in particular, can be a problem, especially when coupled with transportation problems. Rural campuses could also provide a campus bus service, since most programs begin classes at the same time each day. Also required would be a late bus for those students needing to use campus computers for their homework. Another transportation possibility would be for the community college, in partnership with the provincial government, to offer a car-pooling service with vehicles owned by the partners and maintained in college automotive training shops. The college should partner with the Skills and Learning Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Education to improve the processes through which students access funding and through which the Department of Community Services seats are allocated to the college. Changes should also be made in the regulations that limit funding for social assistance recipients to only those in full-time studies.

Issues such as the provision of part-time possibilities, campus day care, pre-course math and science upgrading, and developing a computer bank could be part of an equity policy at the NSCC. The provincial government should support initiatives that expand the NSCC's capacity to address gender inequities, (including establishing a gender equity officer and developing a gender equity policy), taking into account the fact that gender inequities differ depending on urban-rural differences as well as on differences among rural communities.

Dingwall (2000) argued that community colleges are well placed to serve more marginalized populations, because they have a full range of counselling and support services for students. Yet experience with the Equality in Technology Project (as cited in Women's CED Network 2003) would suggest that services are designed to fit the needs of only some students and fail to serve students marginalized by gender, rurality and poverty. Further, rural policy analysts argue there is a need for stronger accountability for universities, schools and colleges on retention and recruitment, using statistical data that are well enough disaggregated to determine whether the institutions are serving some populations better than others (Harley 2001). At the moment, such gender-disaggregated data are difficult to obtain, beyond statistics on the number of women enrolled in particular programs.

***Community College: Business–Institutional Partnerships***

Partnerships provide a real possibility for implementing gender equality mechanisms. For the community college, some partnerships are intended to foster the transition from high school to post-secondary through articulation agreements with high schools (where students are able to take courses that provide credits for high school and for community college programs). This is also accomplished through the CollegePrep program (jointly sponsored by the NSCC, school boards and the Department of Education to provide guidance and information on pre-admission, prerequisites, working with high school teachers, counsellors and students to encourage more students to choose community college as a career path).

Other partnership agreements involve post-secondary institutions providing direct services to business and industry through customized training. Harley (2001) argued the NSCC needs to respond to the training needs of immediate communities in rural areas, and institutions need to reach out to employers. Beaudin and Breau (2001) described the challenges for skills development in the Atlantic Provinces and indicated a need for customized training for special jobs. This is also mentioned in the N.S. Framework (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002: 23). Care must be taken in fostering community college–business partnerships not to further drain resources from the not-for-profit institutions that offer a variety of community-based programs that meet the needs of diverse rural women.

Still other partnership arrangements address industry concerns to have highly skilled workers with relevant experience; post-secondary institutions are encouraged to engage in more co-op programs and work placements, and businesses are encouraged to offer possibilities in their workplaces. Hachey (2002: 36), discussing strategies to reduce out migration from rural areas, argued that, to make it attractive for youth to stay in rural areas, education–business initiatives are required, and it is necessary to “leverage rural business enthusiasm for offering cooperative education and apprenticeships by providing incentives to engage in such programs.” Harley (2001) stressed greater interaction among students, teachers and employers with more real-world experiences, more ways to help students see the actual career choices in order to promote image and awareness of career choices. Youth want more co-op education and other internship shadowing possibilities with employers.

Our study revealed that gender is seldom mentioned in the public documents discussing these partnership initiatives. The various federal and provincial jurisdictions (such as the Skills and Learning Branch of the Nova Scotia Department of Education) could demonstrate leadership here. Provincial/federal funding for partnerships could be made conditional on the inclusion of gender analysis, gender-sensitive strategies and accountability for gender-specific outcomes being brought to partnership agreements. Similarly, the NSCC could show leadership in gender analysis as it negotiates partnerships, whether for customized training or for articulation agreements with high schools. In articulation agreements signed to date, for example, is there any attention specifically to encourage young women? In what program areas have there been agreements? In which parts of the province? Serving what high schools? Are there gender advantages or disadvantages in these choices? Just as there is an FCP and LEEP for equity-governing agencies regulated by the federal government, so too could there be a mechanism

through which demonstrable gender-equity outcomes would be expected in training opportunities where the federal or provincial government provides a portion of the funding.

### **On-the-Job Training**

The workplace is an important determinant of adults' frequency of engagement in formal and informal learning. Both *Knowledge Matters* (HRDC 2001) and *Skills Nova Scotia: Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan* (N.S. Dept of Education 2002) discuss on-the-job-training as an important strategy for skills development. Beaudin and Breau (2001) indicated financial support for training mostly comes from employers. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported the three key factors in skills development as literacy levels, quality and relevance of formal education and participation in job-related training (Harley 2001). There is broad consensus on this strategy for training workers for the new economy. Policy frameworks address it and programs exist to support employers who wish to provide on-the-job-training.

But workplace support for on-the-job-training is not evenly distributed throughout the province. Employers in certain sectors are more likely to support training for workers (public service, public administration, financial), while other are less likely to do so (primary, manufacturing and construction). In the Atlantic Provinces, there are more workers in these latter occupations, which helps explain lower participation rates (Beaudin and Breau 2001).

We can gain further insight into unevenness in on-the-job training by examining three areas:

- patterns of gender inequity in training;
- forms of women's attachment to the labour force; and
- the character of small business in Nova Scotia.

#### ***On-the-Job Training and Patterns of Gender Inequity***

Equity issues are a major concern in the provision of on-the-job training. Studies in Canada suggest that on-the-job training has a polarized character. There is a lack of access for adults with poor literacy levels and those who are economically disadvantaged (Shalla and Schellenberg 1998). Further, according to Shalla and Schellenberg, "a gender analysis indicates that men tend to receive more work-related training than do women" (p. 45).

Women have lower levels of participation in on-the-job training, not just because they have a lower labour market participation rate but because they are seen by employers as having less attachment to the labour force, and so employers put fewer resources into their training. Others point to the discourse on skills itself as disadvantaging women workers. An interesting phenomenon might be noted here. When on-the-job-training is offered, it means that formal recognition is being given to certain skills (i.e., the skills themselves are recognized as valuable). Authors, such as Clarke (2000), have pointed to the fact that some skills may be vitally necessary to a job but are not recognized either by workers or employers as actual skills. (Clarke cites female information workers dismissing their own social and



communication skills as “not really skills.”) At the same time, participation in training in a valued skill leads to formal recognition that a particular worker has these skills. Credential and skills-recognition processes embody gender inequities when women’s skills are not seen as valuable skills and when women have lower levels of participation in training.

A further factor affecting women’s participation rates in on-the-job-training might be that “an increasing number of workers hold more than one job, and they are disproportionately women. For example while women accounted for 46 percent of all employment in 2000, they were 53 percent of all workers who held more than one job” (Townson 2003: 30). Workers holding two jobs are less likely to be able to participate in work-related weekend or week-long training sessions or even participate in evening sessions. What we do not know is the extent to which rural women hold down two paid jobs, nor do we know how many women have a paid job outside the home as well as paid or unpaid work in the family business.

### ***Labour-Force Attachment***

Two aspects of women’s attachment to the labour force may affect the extent to which they benefit from employers’ financial and material support of training. The first is that, in a woman’s first two decades in the labour force, her child-rearing responsibilities may mean either she is not in the work force (and therefore not able to benefit from employer training) or else is unable to take up possibilities for training because of family commitments (e.g., not able to go away for training weekends or stay late for after-hours courses, because of child care commitments). Time studies on women’s household duties in Nova Scotia show that women continue to perform a greater share of household duties (Colman 1998).

The second feature of women’s attachment to the labour force is their over-representation among those engaged in what is called non-standard work. Townson (2003) pointed to three things: the fact that non-standard work is increasingly a feature of the Canadian labour market, the fact that more women than men are in the non-standard work force and the evidence that employer support of training is generally restricted to full-time workers. Thus, people engaged in non-standard work do not benefit from employer-supported, on-the-job-training. And there are more women than men in this category.

Analysts like Townson suggest that policy frameworks should encourage employers to provide training opportunities for part-time, seasonal workers. In Europe, some of the shift to non-standard work has been held in check by more stringent employment legislation (guaranteeing extended benefits to part-time workers and limiting use of contractual employment by employers) (Rees 1998). Policy can shape the relationship between employers and employees. It is in part a failure of policy that leads to non-standard work being a feature of the Canadian labour force (Townson 2003: 15).

### ***Small Business in Rural Nova Scotia***

Rurality also affects on-the-job training rates. Nationally, participation in job-related adult education is lower in rural areas than in urban areas, and the gap is widest in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick (Harley 2001).

In part this has to do with the nature of business and industry in rural areas. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small businesses in Nova Scotia find themselves less able to offer on-the-job training, because they do not have the advantage of economies of scale experienced by larger companies in developing and leading training sessions, nor do they find it easy to release employees for on-the-job training due to their small work force (Harley 2001: 9). In the Federation study, small businesses in rural areas expressed concern they had a lack of knowledge regarding training needs and training options. Smaller firms cannot afford the capital investment in training, whereas in larger firms training can be organized formally (Beaudin and Breau 2001).

Other concerns raised about small business are their lack of familiarity with PLAR (Harley 2001) and the need to help them understand ways of crediting informal and on-the-job learning. This may be particularly important for women workers, given analyses that suggest an undervaluing of women's workplace skills and know-how. This has implications for all workers, but particularly for female workers whose participation rates in on-the-job training are already lower than those of men. If rural Nova Scotia has many small- and medium-sized businesses, and if small businesses face barriers offering training, then all workers in rural areas are disadvantaged, including women. Added to this are barriers for women taking extra training (being absent from home in evenings, or going away for two-day training sessions, because of child-care, elder-care and household responsibilities).

What might all of this tell us about rural women and their access to jobs in the new economy? Certainly, women's access to jobs requires training, either through post-secondary or private college programs, or through on-the-job training for those already in the labour force. Federal and provincial policy initiatives that support and encourage employers to engage in increased on-the-job training should monitor the rates of female participation as well as support those enterprises which allocate resources toward upgrading the skill levels of part-time workers.

More evidence is needed to help us understand rural women's on-the-job training opportunities for advancement into new economy jobs. The rural small business community should be supported in initiatives to track rates for women in rural parts of the province in terms of on-the-job training. Further, as we have stressed several times in this report, these data need to be disaggregated not just by gender, but among women, to identify inequities.

### **Key Summary Points**

Education and training initiatives:

- must be accompanied by effective rural economic and social development policies that recognize the range of ruralities and the strength of rural capacities;
- must take into account the character of the new economy in rural Nova Scotia and work with a wide definition of knowledge-economy jobs;
- must be conceptualized and implemented in ways that do not generate a widening gap

between skilled and less skilled workers; and

- must make support, income and services for education available at multiple entry points along a continuum.

To support these initiatives, federal and provincial governments must:

- implement a national child-care program that is high quality, accessible and affordable;
- support linking the interests of rural small businesses and rural community college campuses in child-care provisioning;
- change funding eligibility so more women are eligible for training, including part-time and other forms of non-standard work;
- provide funding for women-only programming that is long term and linked to social and economic development initiatives;
- recognize the contribution of rural community learning organizations to the training of women, and ensure stable core funding and multi-year project funding;
- build gender equity measures into accountability, data collection and outcomes in all funded programs;
- use partnership agreements to advance a gender equity agenda; and
- provide incentives to link small- and medium-sized businesses, community colleges and local women's learning organizations to provide on-the-job training.

## 7. AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, we weave together threads from the six previous chapters, emphasizing the need to put equal emphasis on social development goals when developing economic policy. We describe an economic process that integrates social and economic goals to provide a genuinely gender-inclusive approach to development that contributes to the sustainability of both individuals and communities. We begin with a summary of federal and provincial policies that we have identified as having failed to serve women in rural Nova Scotia. We then turn to two economic initiatives: micro and small business development and community economic development. In both instances, we show the kinds of inclusive policy directions that could support rural women to participate fully in the new economy.

### **Including Social Goals in Economic Development**

Whether at the municipal, provincial or federal level, governments put policies into place, create departments or agencies, and practise economic development within their specific jurisdictions. In these conventional models, the success of initiatives is easily calculated and specific outcomes are measurable. The jobs created through conventional economic development are not described in human terms but in terms of numbers. The wealth created is not evenly distributed but concentrated in the hands of a few with the expectation it will flow from those hands into the greater community.

Not measured in conventional economic development are its social implications. Measuring job creation by the number does not take into account the social values attached to work. For example, is the job seasonal or part time? Is it a low-waged job or a job with no benefits attached? Is it a job with no security or a job with no possibility for advancement? A job is not just a job. Our work influences every aspect of how we live and the quality of our lives.

When growth is measured in terms of money generation alone, the human costs are lost. Did this growth make one sector poorer while enhancing another? Did it deplete a resource or pollute the environment? Was a park or a green space lost to secure this growth? The wealth of a community can also be measured by the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of its citizens.

Most feminist analysts recognize that women's economic well-being is not solely determined by economic trends (Elson 1994; Waring 1988; Bakkar 1994). However, policy makers have been slow to recognize that social and economic realities are inevitably intertwined (Townson 1997: 2). To include rural women's economic development within the framework of an economic policy, the policy's social implications must be considered. Throughout this report we have argued that social and economic policies must be equally valued. Further, a system-wide analysis of policies across a range of jurisdictions reveals contradictions, gaps and exclusions that disadvantage rural women, particularly women who are poor or belong to doubly disadvantaged groups: African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women. When we seek access to new economy opportunities for rural women, we must place it

within the context of access to the old economy. Information presented in Chapter 3 showed women in rural Nova Scotia have higher unemployment rates, lower average incomes and lower labour force participation rates than women in urban areas. This means rural women have less access to full-time and part-time work and are less able to access higher-paying, longer-term jobs. If rural women are going to participate fully in the opportunities presented through the new economy, their issues and realities must be considered. One of those realities is that, having been left behind in the old economy, their participation in the new economy presents an even greater challenge for them than it does for their urban counterparts or for either rural or urban men.

Through our review of federal and provincial economic policies in Chapter 5, we determined that rural women have not been considered and have not benefited through various implementation strategies. The latter has a direct correlation to the former. If economic policies are considered gender neutral, then why are more women employed in non-standard work arrangements, and why do they earn less than men across all occupational groups (McFadyen 2000: 18)? If government is to serve rural women with equity and justice, economic policies must be developed in tandem with the social policies that support their implementation.

If rural women are to access the paid work force in greater numbers, a national child care strategy is essential. Because of their gender-based role as primary caregivers, many women cannot attach to the labour force without safe and affordable child care during working hours. The affordability of such a strategy must be juxtaposed against the loss of these women's creativity, ingenuity, strength and intelligence to new economy developments. Once we value the contributions of rural women, we can also see the value of implementing a fully funded national child-care strategy.

If rural women are to become viable players in the new economy, an economic policy would have to include accessible upgrading and training opportunities developed specifically for them. Over the past 15 years, we have seen support for stable progressive training programs disappear, only to be replaced by short-term projects available to small numbers of participants with no continuity of programming. An economic policy that includes rural women would put into place the kinds of programs that would build a bridge between the strengths and skills they have and those they will require to participate fully in the new economy.

As well, if an economic policy were to consider rural women, the jobs it created would include the benefits that have become crucial to our well-being. Rural women must have access to EI benefits, to medical benefits and to programs that assist them to build a retirement plan. These are the benefits through which many Canadians have been able to find the security to take the risks necessary for meeting new challenges. They are the benefits that rural women, through policy, have not been able to access.

No economic policy, or resultant program, should be created in isolation from those it is intended to serve, and our research shows that rural women are not considered in the development of current policies. What would inclusive economic policies look like? How

would women-centred programs offer real opportunities for rural women to participate fully in the new economy?

To explore this, we first examine policy directions that would support women entrepreneurs in micro and small business development. Then we describe CED and show what practices would support rural women in this process. We conclude by discussing areas within which government policy could support women-centred CED in rural areas.

### **Micro and Small Business Development**

Micro and small business development is supported as a viable option for some rural women. It is a way to work and bring money into the household when other employment options are few. It is also a way to maintain a flexible schedule while balancing family and community commitments. Because women know their communities well, they often recognize a market niche for a new business, and the businesses they create have an instrumental role to play, as they buy locally, create work locally and draw new people to a community.

The 45,300 self-employed women in Atlantic Canada represent slightly more than a third of the self-employed in the region (ACOA 2003: 5). The vast majority of these businesses are unincorporated with no paid help, and only 10 percent are in the goods-producing sector. The Agency believes “women represent an under-utilized source of skills and knowledge and have the potential to have significantly more impact on the Atlantic economy in the coming years” (ACOA 2003: 5). Since all sectors would benefit if women were to use their skills and knowledge fully, it would seem advantageous to pave the way for this to happen.

The Prime Minister’s Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs found common themes and issues through country-wide consultations. These included:

- access to capital;
- access to employment benefits and social safety net programs;
- access to mentoring programs, business skills training and networking opportunities;
- access to information and government programs;
- the need to focus on the service sector; and
- the need for research.

#### ***Access to Capital***

A full 40 percent of the 250 rural businesswomen and potential businesswomen consulted in Nova Scotia indicated their lack of a credit history was an obstacle to getting a loan (Women’s CED Network 2002). In our consultations, one service provider said:

*Business is considered to be a male activity — the “old boys network” is still very much alive in this community. Women can’t get credit at the banks.*

Accessing credit is clearly a gender issue. Policies that do not take this into account have not

achieved equity. Further, an OECD-sponsored survey of Canadian business owners found that in 95 percent of the cases, women were asked to pay higher interest rates for loans and requested to provide higher guarantees or collateral than their male counterparts (IONESCU 2003: 6). Findings from a Women's World Finance survey of women business owners in Atlantic Canada showed 74.3 percent of those surveyed started their businesses with money from their own savings or from the sale of their personal assets (Women's World Finance 1997: 10).

According to a recent study from the University of Guelph Centre for Families, Work and Well-being, the Government of Canada's role in enhancing access to financing for self-employed women should be focussed on servicing areas not currently looked after by the private sector. This role should entail assuring greater access to low-interest emergency micro-loans to help bridge uneven cash flow periods, expanding community lending programs that target women unable to secure funds through commercial banks or credit unions, subsidizing one-on-one business counselling services and providing greater tax incentives

for new businesses (within the first five years) (Rooney et al. 2003: 93).

To support women in their development and growth of micro and small businesses, government policies and programs must recognize the inequities inherent in the current system of credit lending and seek to provide the supports that would enable equity.

#### ***Access to Employment Benefits and Social Safety Net Programs***

The Government of Canada needs to look at the implications of the rising number of self-employed women in Canada and their economic contributions and status. Under the "old economy," women made gains due to higher education levels, increased labour force participation and public policy and legislation supporting women's work, such as pay equity, maternity leave, Employment Insurance and the Canadian Pension Plan. Under the "New Economy," there are growing numbers of women who are self-employed and therefore fall outside the scope of those policies and the legislation that improved women's working lives and economic status (Hughes cited in The Prime Ministers Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs 2003: 27).

Much of Canada's social safety net does not include women entrepreneurs. They cannot access EI or parental leave benefits. In case of an illness or a pregnancy, they lose income and are at risk of losing their livelihoods. Our newest addition to the safety net is a policy on compassionate leave that allows for six weeks away from work to care for a dying relative. Although unpaid caring effort is often left to women in our society, this Compassionate Leave Benefit is not available to women entrepreneurs, because they are not eligible for EI benefits. The study from the University of Guelph Centre for Families, Work and Well-being entitled, *Self-Employment for Women: Policy Options that Promote Equality and Economic Opportunity*, recommended the Government of Canada enhance income protection for maternity, parental and short-term sickness and dependent care leave and extend eligibility

to the self-employed (Rooney et al. 2003). For policies and programs to be supportive of

women entrepreneurs, they must allow for the same access to these benefits as they do for paid workers.

***Access to Mentoring Programs, Business Skills Training and Networking Opportunities***

Women entrepreneurs need the help and guidance of other women who have faced the same challenges. They need access to the knowledge and support of other women entrepreneurs, local associations and lending institutions. Without an organized and funded support system, rural women add the barrier of isolation to the already formidable task of starting and running small businesses. “Banks and associations that offer mentoring programs should re-evaluate their eligibility criteria to ensure equal accessibility to those in lower earning categories” (Rooney et al 2003: 94).

From creating a viable business plan, to sourcing materials and supplies, to maintaining accurate financial records, to controlling cash flow, to expanding marketing approaches — there is a great deal of information and skill needed for the successful development and growth of a small business. Rural women entrepreneurs need to have access to cost-effective, locally delivered training programs that would assist them in their business development.

As noted in the recent study by the University of Guelph on self-employment for women, enhancing access to training and mentoring is essential. They found that accessing training when self-employed is costly due to the actual fees required to participate and the cost in time away from business when participating means having to forgo earning income. They note that ongoing skill enhancement is a necessary and critical component of many jobs today and should be readily and more easily available to those in the self-employed sector. They go on to recommend that government subsidies (funded jointly by federal and provincial governments) should be available for self-employed individuals who want to upgrade their skills. These subsidies should be targeted to those with fewer financial resources to purchase courses (e.g., those in low earnings categories or those within the first three years of starting their business) (Rooney et al. 2003: 94).

***Access to Information and Government Programs***

The task of discovering what is already available to them is often a barrier for rural women entrepreneurs. While many government departments, agencies and associations have made this information available on their Web sites, it is still not easily accessible to those without either information technology capacity or knowledge. As well, with so many levels of government involved in economic development, cross-referencing needs with specific programs can become a maze of dead-end leads and bureaucratic red tape. We also learned that the kinds of businesses many rural women are involved in and the amount of credit they need do not fit in the framework within which the economic development agencies operate. Rural women entrepreneurs need a women-positive, accessible approach to information about government programs, financial institutions, agencies and associations.

***The Need to Focus on the Service Sector***

In the *Rural Women Get Credit Consultation Review* (Women’s CED Network 2002:15), it was noted: “The majority (55 percent) of the women-owned businesses surveyed are in the



service sector—retail, food service, tourism and consulting. The service sector is often more labour-intensive with lower demand for capital assets, making it difficult for banks to value the business from a tangible point of view.”

Because many rural women start businesses in the service sector and because those businesses contribute to the economies of rural communities, it is necessary to establish programs and policies that support and demonstrate the value of this work. It is also necessary for the banking industry to remove barriers to the granting of loans to the service sector, and increase the transparency of their lending criteria (Rooney et al. 2003: xi).

### ***The Need for Research***

Thirty-seven percent of Canadians are employed in non-standard work. The term “non-standard work” perpetuates the notion that the self-employed are second-class individuals. Many women entrepreneurs throughout Canada indicated they already feel they are not taken seriously by government departments and agencies or by financial institutions (Prime Minister’s Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs 2003: 9). To gain support for rural women entrepreneurs, research must be conducted that throws a light on their contributions to our economy, to their communities and to their families. With so many working as unregistered sole proprietors, we are unable to establish their very numbers, let alone their value.

The Province of Nova Scotia also made a submission to the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs, through the office of the then Minister of Economic Development, Cecil P. Clarke. In his letter, Clarke observed: “Most of these provincial initiatives are not gender-based; however, women are attracted to the various programs and services, and participate in them on a continuing basis.” To underscore this point, he pointed to their new initiative, the Youth Entrepreneurial Scholarship, through which 27 scholarships were awarded. Of these, he indicated, “six were to young women” (N.S. Office of Economic Development 2003). With less than one quarter of the scholarships awarded to young women, perhaps it is time for the province to consider initiating more gender-based accountability measures.

Women entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia and Canada play a significant role in developing products, delivering services, creating jobs and generating tax dollars. Rural women entrepreneurs need to be considered when policies are developed. It is the only way that they will begin to achieve equity.

### **Community Economic Development**

CED is one of the most significant strategies available to local communities experiencing economic difficulty which, in the current context, very likely means transitioning into the New Economy. Other strategies for local economic development have been tried and, in general, have failed (Gurstein 2001:43).

Nova Scotia has a long history of community-managed social and economic development. The successes of the Antigonish movement in the 1930s are well documented. In the 1970s,

organizations such as New Dawn in Sydney and the Human Resources Development Association/HRDA Enterprises of Halifax created successful enterprises using community development principles and employing low-income citizens. In 1993, research on 10 Canadian CED initiatives concluded:

The cumulative [net] benefit to government over the fifteen years that HRDA has been in existence amounted to \$7,068,900. In 1992 alone, benefits exceeded costs by \$1,476,786. Over the long haul, then, HRDA has made a significant financial contribution in return for the government support it received (Perry and Lewis 1994: 113).

These organizations continue to demonstrate how community-led enterprises can be powerful agents for social and economic change. Practitioners are passionate in describing these types of organizations as unique, unconventional, extremely innovative places, requiring a long-term commitment, a strong knowledge base, co-operation with government, partnerships, research and capital. They are, in many ways, a culture unto themselves.

Typically, successful CED organizations offer a broad range of programs, services and interconnected activities. Their strategies may include social development, training and education, enterprise and co-operative development, access to capital, environmental stewardship and human resource development. To accomplish their goals, they must be flexible, creative, comprehensive and multi-faceted with a long-term approach that fosters multi-partnered relationships with both the private and public sectors. In short, they must be empowering.

In design, CED organizations are as different as the communities from which they have developed. They are linked solely by their locally designed and controlled approach to social and economic development. Although some of their unique strategies, approaches and elements may be replicated in other communities, best practices are organizations that work within a distinct community and at a particular time in its development. They tie the social values of a community to its economic growth. Growth must be sustainable and sensitive to the environment. Workers must feel secure and able to move within their jobs. Citizens must have a voice in what works for their communities. People need to have real input into the decisions that will have an effect on their lives and their livelihoods. The values of CED are rooted in community.

Over the past decade, various levels of government have used community economic development to describe their activities, while being reluctant to give communities any control over decision making. In this government context, CED has come to mean the devolution of responsibilities to the community level without the necessary supports and resources to do the work or the necessary power to control outside influences. Genuine CED is about shifting decision-making power from government to those who are most affected by the decisions. In doing so, we can begin to address both social and economic issues and to help move people from poverty to independence and productivity.

Community economic development requires government to come to the table as an equal

partner — not as the driver or controller of the development process. Government can provide the resources, the information, the capital and the tools needed to assist with the development process. It can create policies and programs that support and encourage sustainable development through CED. Unfortunately, instead of finding ways to support the development of true CED organizations, many government policies, strategies and frameworks result in quasi-governmental organizations mandated to do CED work. And, although government may make efforts to consult with communities around policy and program development, this is usually carried out after the policy has been crafted, as opposed to inviting the engagement and full participation of citizens in the development process.

Despite impressive economic growth, Canada is still faced with problems of poverty, social exclusion and regional disparities. The solution lies not in more and bigger government but in new forms of social economy organizations that are community-based. Through collective enterprises and a variety of Community Economic Development organizations across Canada, social goals are being achieved using business and economic means. The results are significant, but the federal role and profile in supporting these efforts is limited (CCEDNet 2003: Executive Summary).

In Quebec, community-led organizations, supported by government economic development policies, have developed a *social economy* or *third sector*. The social economy is identified with a third sector of the economy to distinguish it from the market economy, the public economy and the informal sector (Vaillancourt and Tremblay 2002). According to the *Économie sociale, santé et bien-être*, social economy enterprises and organizations have these characteristics.

- They are made up of citizens' associations (as opposed to shareholders) that meet the needs of their members. The leading entities of the social economy are community organizations, co-operatives and non-profit organizations.
- They pursue objectives that are simultaneously social and economic in character. However, social economy enterprises are not profit oriented.
- They produce goods and services and provide support for citizenry (e.g., through advocacy).
- They have distinctive organizational structures for making decisions and a democratic form of organization promoting joint involvement by employees, users and, in some cases, members of the surrounding community.
- They rely substantially on paid work and emphasize job creation. However some social economy organizations (those with a formal structure that are legally recognized as non-profit organizations) also accommodate volunteer resources. Many enterprises and organizations count on these resources to deliver certain services.
- They foster social cohesion and social bonding (Vaillancourt and Tremblay 2002: 22).

## **Rural Women and Community Economic Development**

Study after study has shown that there is no effective development strategy in which women do not play a central role. When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier and better fed; their income, savings and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is also true of communities and, in the long run, whole countries (Annan 2002).

Throughout Canada and internationally, women's organizations have had a long history working for the kind of fundamental change that recognizes the importance of social development goals in economic policies and programs. It is from this foundation that women-centred CED has evolved. Women have brought their experiences and insights gained through working in communities at the grass-roots level. They have brought their expertise from the social justice movement to create CED organizations centred on women's needs. For decades, women in Canadian communities have played significant roles as community workers, volunteers and advocates for economic equality. It is this grounding, this deep appreciation and understanding of the impact of economic inequality, that forms the basis of women-centred CED.

A recent report from the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Women's Community Economic Development Council (Livingstone and Chagnon 2004: 8) indicated that there are many compelling reasons to support women-centred CED. This review of available research found that women face gender discrimination in employment and in the marketplace and have greater difficulty than men achieving economic security; increased economic self-sufficiency for women impacts directly on their health and well-being and that of their families; and CED strategies enable low-income women to realize their individual and collective potential and to effect positive and long-term changes in their lives and circumstances.

There is a strong history of women-centred CED in Canada. Since the early 1980s, organizations such as WomenFutures CED Society worked to promote women-centred CED by providing assistance to women's groups in British Columbia and across Canada. In the 1990s, organizations such as Women and Rural Economic Development (WRED), offered a range of CED programs and services for women in rural Ontario. Today, organizations such as the PARO Centre for Women's Enterprise in Northwestern Ontario provide not only micro loans but also operate a micro-business centre for women, training and educational programs, a community retail store, as well as a range of networking and marketing support services. The Women's Economic Equality Society in Nova Scotia has worked with more than 5,000 rural women, creating opportunities for skills development and training, small business support, access to technology, access to credit, as well as a series of guidebooks which demystify the concepts of CED and make it accessible in language and women-positive presentation. Since 1991, the Canadian Women's Foundation has supported women's economic development by providing financial support to women's community groups for initiatives, such as self-employment training, feasibility studies, worker co-operatives and social purpose enterprises.

Women-centred CED works to respond to the challenges women face in their daily lives and in their search for economic independence. This approach to CED advocates a holistic, inclusive, long-term strategy, built on a foundation of women's empowerment. Organizations focus on addressing practical needs, such as child care and transportation, so women can participate in the economy. It focusses on diverse women and specifically reaches out to those living on low incomes. At the same time, women-centred CED works to address issues influencing women's political, social and economic equality.

The range of forces against which poor and marginalized women must struggle is formidable: low self-esteem, complex family relationships, hostile or indifferent communities, systemic gender discrimination and harassment, unemployment or underemployment, lack of education, ageism, racism and the daily grind that leaves women with scant energy to contemplate the possibility of transforming their conditions (Murray and Ferguson 2001: 12).

Women-centred CED works to overcome these forces through a set of core values and principles. This foundation encompasses this work by ensuring that social and economic development objectives are equally valued; that the complexities of women's lives are at the core of the development process; that women are empowered through personal development programs that build self-esteem; that the unpaid work women do in their homes and communities is valued; that child care and transportation supports are provided and programming is at flexible times; that diverse women participate; that development strategies are comprehensive in scope and holistic in practice by including skills development and training, support for self-employment, micro lending, and support for community enterprises and co-operatives; that the language of business, economics, government and development is demystified; that the impact of the digital divide is addressed through access to information and communication technologies; that multi-sectoral partnerships with community groups, agencies, government departments and the private sector are encouraged; and that local networks, support groups and organizations are supported to build their intellectual, operational and financial capacity for this work.

Women-centred CED embraces a core perspective that we have alluded to throughout this report.

The artificial separation of economic and social objectives is systemic to conventional economic development theory and practice. In contrast, the essence of women's CED is the integration of social and economic objectives in order to achieve long-term community stability (Alderson and Conn 1988: 38).

One main challenge for women-centred CED is the lack of understanding and support for women's programming. Throughout our research, we heard from numerous service providers and women's organizations that if funding is found for women-centred CED initiatives, it is traditionally short term and lacking in comprehensive, multi-year commitments. Through these consultations, we also heard there is a demonstrated lack of political will or public policy to support gender-inclusive programming. Current quasi-

governmental CED programs are not gender inclusive by policy and are supportive of women only if those providing the service happen to understand what it means to be inclusive of women. “Many community economic development initiatives do not have a well-developed gender analysis and women are left out” (Murray and Ferguson 2001: 3). Inclusion can be accomplished either through women-centred programming or through taking women’s life conditions into account when developing programs intended to be equally available to all. As we learned through our policy-maker consultations, there has not been a systemic, gender-inclusive approach taken by any level of government in CED. In fact, it was clearly stated through our consultations with policy makers that CED programs in Nova Scotia are targeted toward the mainstream. One service provider gave a clear picture of the necessary links between economic and the social issues.

*The issues for Black women include poverty, housing, abuse, single parenthood and low self-esteem. Economic development must deal with people first. We can’t have economic equality without “people” equality. It’s very complex — we can’t talk about economic development separate from social development. Black women don’t come alone — they come with their families. Their families are their lives. They get their strength from their families.*

In 2003, ACOA launched the Women in Business Initiative. The WBI has been implemented through partnering organizations, such as the CBDCs. The focus is on linking women to existing agencies and organizations within their communities for support, information and financing. These organizations are primarily mainstream in their delivery of programs. Through an urban-based university women’s business centre, the WBI employs five facilitators who work in rural communities in mainland Nova Scotia. Although the WBI will support some rural women in their efforts to start or expand their business, its impacts may be limited by its lack of holistic, community-driven, women-centred programming. Women-centred CED programs are generally created and delivered at the community level and are developed as long-term, holistic strategies. It is not clear whether ACOA has directed all its funds for women’s entrepreneurship to this initiative, exhausting any opportunity for community-led, alternative women-centred CED approaches. At the heart of this alternative women-centred approach is a commitment to social change.

### **Building the Foundation for Women-Centred CED**

A recent HRDC report (2002: 26) advocated the CED approach as a viable strategy to support women’s employment in economically depressed areas such as the Atlantic Region. What roles, then, can governments play to initiate this? Governments must recognize that their policies, initiatives and frameworks will have differing effects on men and women. If the context of rural women’s lives is not considered at the development stage of policy building, the effects are bound to be negative. If rural women are not consulted at the development stage or are consulted and not heard, the effects will be negative. For women-centred CED to work, it must be embedded in government policy and supported through programming. Once

gender equity is mandated — as it has been federally — it must be prioritized, which has not been the case federally.

Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), a commitment to ensuring that development activities benefit women as well as men is evidenced in their Women in Development policy, which indicates there is mounting evidence that a focus on gender equity and gender-sensitive planning makes sense from an economic efficiency perspective. International financial institutions are among the organizations which have recognized investing in women is central to sustainable development. Investing in women leads to lasting economic growth, improved family welfare and a reduction in poverty — a more equitable distribution of the socio-economic benefits of development. As one service provider working in rural Nova Scotia indicated during our consultations:

*Women need to be embedded at the heart of policy.*

According to a recent report from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women (Lord and Martell 2004: 44):

A community-based, women-centred approach to CED integrates economic development of employment with other social objectives of importance to low-income women, such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, rebuilding marginalized communities, workplace accommodation for persons with disabilities, and flexible schedules for workers with family responsibilities.

### ***Funding Commitments for Women-Centred CED***

Since rural women have been left behind in the old economy, it is easy to deduce that they will fall even further behind as they face the challenges of the new economy. There is no short-term fix or easy solution. Over the last decade, we have seen governments cull back their commitments to those most in need. We have seen core-funded programs disappear and replaced by short-term projects, which must fit into government's narrow and ever-changing priorities. If women-centred CED is going to become a solution for rural women's entrance into the new economy, governments must commit to support it over the long term.

Funding support for core operations of women-centred CED organizations is crucial to build a base from which to respond to social and economic challenges and to engage women in a meaningful process of development. Multi-year project funding must replace short-term, short-sighted funding mechanisms. Women living in poverty require longer-term bridging programs and comprehensive training and development programs to gain the confidence, skills and knowledge to move from poverty to sustainable employment.

Many efforts are currently being made at the community level by women's organizations dedicated to improving women's economic security to help them to achieve financial independence. An infrastructure of community-based women's organizations with the know-how and expertise to deliver programs currently exists, but its funding base is somewhat fragile, and more sustainable funding mechanisms are required if community-based transition-

to-employment capacity is to be built and developed at the community level (Lord and Martell 2004: 46).

Financing is also needed to establish alternative loan funds and community lending programs for women who choose micro and small business development but who have no collateral or credit history. As well, investment capital is required to establish community enterprises and co-operatives designed to create training and employment opportunities for rural women and services for rural communities. “The lack of core funding is a major impediment for women’s CED and cannot be overstated” (Livingstone and Chagnon 2004: 101).

### ***Building Capacity for Women-Centred CED***

Women-centred CED offers an inclusive, holistic approach to economic development which values women’s contributions in the home and community, in business and in the new economy workplace. Organizations need to be provided with the financial and technical support to build their capacity for this work.

Building community capacity is an holistic approach to solving problems and to improving the quality of life. It is precisely this complexity that makes the concept of building community capacity so rich and compelling (Torjman 1998: 3).

Organizations and communities that have built capacity understand that it requires a commitment to alleviate poverty, eliminate discrimination, empower others and, eventually, to create structures that invest in long-term social and economic development. As one service provider we consulted stated:

*It was obvious when the organization reached operational capacity. We were running profitable businesses, creating real jobs, paying fair wages and benefits so that people could see a future without welfare, investing in local entrepreneurs, running literacy and training programs, employing skilled and innovative professionals and working with government and business as real partners.*

Opportunities need to be created so organizations can build on their current operational, financial and human capacity in an honest, progressive and supportive manner. Women need opportunities to learn the technical skills necessary for the development of social and economic enterprises. They need tools and resources to support the delivery of effective programs, and they need networking opportunities to learn from and share their experiences with others. Finally, they need a commitment to policy development that values and celebrates the contributions women make to communities. “Organizations engaged in women-centred

CED require training, skills development and networking in order to increase their capacity to deliver services and to support women in the areas of business, organizational and personal development” (Livingstone and Chagnon 2004: 105).



A vast amount of knowledge and expertise is required to run a successful non-profit organization, implement a range of skills development and training programs, establish and manage an alternative loan fund, establish and operate successful community enterprises, build awareness and support for this work and establish sustainable partnerships with public, private and community stakeholders. This is the work that is needed to create new economy employment for women living in rural communities. If governments supported the development and capacity of women-centred CED, rural women would have an alternative economic development sector designed specifically to address their complex needs and support their economic security.

### ***Addressing Infrastructure Challenges***

Several times through this report, we commented on infrastructures needed to reduce barriers to rural women's participation in the new economy. Women are the primary caregivers of children. In Nova Scotia the child poverty rate is 19.2 percent — the third highest in Canada (Raven and Frank 2003). It is evident that policies are needed that support quality, accessible, affordable child care for rural children. Child care is a critical structural element needed to facilitate women's access to the new economy.

Another needed structural support is transportation. In Nova Scotia, most rural communities lack either public or private transportation systems. Without viable transportation, women cannot access economic opportunities.

Rural women who live in poverty are also challenged by the rules and regulations embedded in income assistance programs. To support women's participation in CED, disincentives and obstacles must be removed. One service provider questioned how women on social assistance could enter the new economy when many are without a basic telephone service, which is not considered essential under our income support programs.

Information and communications technology is a reality of the new economy. Access to this infrastructure is a prerequisite for entrance. Women must be assured of connectivity and the supports associated with its access. One service provider pointed out how difficult it would be for women on social assistance to even enter the new economy when the free, used computers they were given on one project were identified as assets.

### ***Building Research and Development Capacity***

During our consultations with policy makers, it was evident that to influence public policy and enhance programming support for women, a compelling body of research about the impact and experiences of women-centred CED is needed. Through organizations, such as the WEE Society, WomenFutures, WRED, the Canadian Women's Foundation and the Women's Community Economic Development Council, considerable effort has been made to provide a critical analysis of this women-centred development process. However, further funding support is needed to measure the impacts and examine the experiences, innovative strategies and techniques that embody this inclusive development approach.

Women-centred CED needs to be recognized as a viable solution to address the issues that

so many rural women face. A national network of women who are instrumental to the development of women-centred CED is also needed to have a national voice for women in policy development. The Women's Community Economic Development Council is a newly formed organization that is paying attention to research and policy development supporting women-centred CED.

### ***Applying a Gender-Based Analysis***

The federal government's March 2004 budget announced increased support for community-based development and the social economy. It is essential that women-centred CED organizations are at all national and provincial decision-making tables to ensure that gender-based approaches are used to design the framework and its implementation and evaluation strategies. This is a prime opportunity for the Government of Canada to show leadership by making a commitment to women across this country who are working to build their communities that nothing less than an integrated gender-based analysis in all aspects of this program will be acceptable.

### **Key Summary Points**

- Understanding the impact of economic policy on gender is fundamental. Throughout our research and consultations, we learned that for equality to be achieved, women must be included as equal partners in the planning, implementation and monitoring processes of economic policy.
- In this chapter we explored the kinds of economic development programs that can arise from an inclusive economic policy.
- We pointed to the importance of women's micro and small business enterprises and the need for economic policies that support and value the significant contributions these women make to the economy.
- We explored women-centred CED as an inclusive development process grounded in the understanding that programs must recognize the importance families play in women's lives, the contributions women make through their unpaid work at home and in their communities, the systemic gender barriers women face daily and that opportunities are created with a long-term lens and an empowering focus.
- We acknowledged the federal government's March 2004 budget announcement of increased support for CED and the social economy and stressed how vital it is to have women at federal and provincial decision-making tables to work toward gender equity.

## 8. POLICY MAKING AND GENDER EQUITY MECHANISMS

Over the last 20 years, the federal government has established a number of mechanisms to bring a gender analysis to the policy-making process. In 1995, Canada announced its Plan for Gender Equity, which had at its core the concept of gender mainstreaming.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, Status of Women Canada has worked with various departments to develop and implement gender-based analysis (GBA)<sup>2</sup> as the tool for ensuring gender equity analysis in federal policy making.

Since 1995, there have been some changes in federal policy, which have been beneficial for women, in terms of maternity and paternity leave, for example. But the results of this research project demonstrate that changes to several key federal policies have been detrimental to many women in rural Nova Scotia, particularly those most marginalized from possibilities of employment in the new economy. In this report, we have described the loss of designated status for women in government-funded programs. We have described the restructuring of federal social security and changes in EI, which have negatively impacted many women in terms of both income support and training, imperiling the economic security of many women and directly affecting child poverty rates in Nova Scotia. We have also described funding policies that have led to a serious curtailment in the ongoing activities of community organizations, especially those that had previously provided support for women's training and employability. Finally, we have described economic policies that have failed to articulate and monitor gender outcomes.

How is it possible that these detrimental trends have been enacted during a decade within which there has also been the implementation of the Plan for Gender Equity? Our understanding of gender equity in policy making is derived from our examination of literature pertaining to gender equity mechanisms and from consultations with senior managers and directors, both federal and provincial, involved in policy making in Nova Scotia.

In this final chapter, we examine what has been called women's equality machinery, including the strategy that has guided the federal government — gender mainstreaming and the key tool for this process — GBA. Gender-based analysis is intended to document men and women's experiences to show the differential impacts of policy. At the provincial level, there is no similar gender equity policy to guide policy making, programs and funding, although the NSACSW, established in 1977, brings gender issues to the table in strategic areas of provincial policy making.

Before analyzing the data from our consultations and policy analysis, we turn to a brief discussion of the concept of mainstreaming gender.

### **Competing Understandings of Mainstreaming Gender**

Teresa Rees (1998), in her analysis of equal opportunity training policies in the EU, said that a feminist conceptualization of mainstreaming aims to transform existing structures by

integrating equality objectives throughout the policy process, recognizing that many of the structures, policies, even the concepts used, are androcentric, constructed on norms that fit male patterns of work in both public and private spheres.<sup>3</sup> A transformative approach to mainstreaming aims for structural transformation as well as attention to multiple and intersecting forms of difference.

Rees argued that many mainstreaming initiatives are not transformative. “The concept of mainstreaming is expressed as one of integrating equality objectives into all policies. However, this may still leave the priorities, assumptions and values of the dominant culture intact” (Rees 1998: 68). Rees pointed to “the danger that mainstreaming will be used as a reason to discontinue positive action measures” (p. 167). In light of our research, we would argue that Canadian policy making has succumbed to this danger.

For there to be effective gender equality mechanisms, Rees argued, clear legislated procedures and practices for equal treatment are needed as a starting point. Then, government policies need to continue to commit to positive action strategies, such as targeted women’s programming policies for training, supported by ongoing public funding.<sup>4</sup> The argument for this is that as long as we have a society divided along multiple lines of inequality, and as long as the “gender contract” remains intact in the private sphere, women are going to be at a disadvantage, and even more so when disadvantaged by financial and racial inequalities. Thus, the move to mainstreaming needs to be seen as a journey, where the targeted programs for women remain intact alongside the mainstreaming process. To abandon the women-only projects in the move to a gender mainstreaming approach leads to an easy slippage back into a general “equal treatment” conceptualization. Rees argued that this is what has happened in the EU. Even though there is talk of mainstreaming, “the approach to EO [equal opportunities] in the ESF [European Social Fund] is laissez-faire, with a model of equal treatment supplemented by some positive action. There is inadequate gender monitoring” (Rees 1998: 168). This description could equally apply to Canada and Nova Scotia.

### **Gender Awareness in Government Policy and Program Development**

Information gathered through our consultations reveals the minimal extent to which gender analysis is considered at the policy-making table. In our senior-level consultations at federal and provincial levels in a range of departments, we learned that discussions of gender did not arise in any systematic or regular way, although officials in HRDC and the Department of Community Services indicated there was often talk about “women’s issues.” It is possible that in Ottawa, a formal gender analysis is brought into the policy-making process at various stages of formulation, but we learned that at local levels where policies are interpreted and programs and strategies formulated for regional implementation, formal gender analysis is not used.

One issue with GBA is its marginalization in the policy-making process. It seems that in many instances GBA is seen as a checklist that is implemented superficially. In all our consultations with government officials, it was clear that gender analysis was not a priority. Since the 1995 announcement of the Federal Plan for Gender Equity, women have no longer been a designated group within policy for specific programming and funding initiatives at the

federal level, and efforts to mainstream gender through GBA seem to have been slow and, in some situations, ineffective.<sup>5</sup>

In our consultations, we asked about the use of GBA tools. In Nova Scotia, it is safe to say that GBA is underused, undervalued and marginalized whether in the regional federal offices or at the provincial levels. In several of our consultations, we heard comments like:

*GBA? No, I don't see any evidence of it here. It is like every other initiative like that. It's a bunch of boxes to be ticked...sometimes. But we have never done gender-based analysis in our programs. It's never been done, and our region would be an obvious region to do that. I remember the documents coming out, and there are people who are concerned with that in Ottawa. I don't even know what section they're in or what [they do], but they don't relate to us.*

In only one instance did those interviewed indicate they were likely to begin to use a gender lens in their work, and that was within HRDC, which in 2003 launched a department-wide policy that provided a framework for ongoing efforts to integrate gender analysis in its work. This federal department has a lengthy history of attention to women's issues through its Women's Bureau, and more recently through its Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate. In December 2003, HRDC was reorganized into two departments (Social Development Canada and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada). Because of this split, the Gender Analysis and Policy Directorate no longer formally exists. Research needs to track whether the two new departments will be able to maintain commitments to gender equity, to implement the policy on gender analysis and to continue to support the Network of Gender Advisors.

The absence of GBA at the provincial level means there is no system-wide mandated intention to develop gender-sensitive policies, strategies or action plans. One person we consulted at the provincial level said:

*Gender lens and rural lens — that language is more federal-speak that the provinces sometimes adopt.*

We were interested in how senior officials talked about gender when discussing how consideration of gender entered into the policy-making process. We wondered whether they would use the language of GBA, or whether they would take a gender neutral approach. We heard a range of responses that led us to the conclusion that commitment to and training in GBA was not widespread, and not well understood. When we asked about how gender was attended to, there seemed to be five general responses.

*It depends who is at the table.*

*We don't do women anymore.  
Project funding is open to anyone.*

*Gender means women's issues.*

*Gender means numbers.*

### ***It Depends Who Is at the Table***

Some people we consulted indicated that gender was raised when particular individuals “were at the table.” These individuals might be people within the government attentive to gender issues, or women from community groups or from the NSACSW. We learned that one other instance when gender might be raised was when leadership within the department or office had a commitment to gender. It is clear that if gender is not embedded in core principles and built into the accountability and monitoring processes, then raising the issue of gender is left up to those who are directly involved.

### ***We Don't Do Women Anymore***

Many of those we consulted in federal and provincial departments and regional offices reminded us that “we don't do women anymore,” because women have been mainstreamed. Officials would then go on to talk about how programs were for both men and women.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the initial transformative conceptualization of mainstreaming, gender mainstreaming in Canada seems to mean that gender has disappeared from the public agenda. We are left with an equal treatment model, which as Rees (1998: 29) said, simply “maintain(s) the inequalities that exist in society.”

### ***It's Open to Anyone — Men or Women***

This epitomizes the core concept of an equal opportunities model. We showed in Chapter 5 that in economic policies in particular, attention to gender is not visible in policy action plans and reports, despite inclusive language in the policy and strategy documents. Our consultations with regional staff of federal departments as well as with senior provincial civil servants confirmed that, in general, very few economic development programs targeted for women in Nova Scotia exist. In recent years in education and training, there have been a few women-only programs. Instead, the assumption is, among those we consulted, that the various programs are equally available to men and women. The assumption seems to be that in economic development, what is needed is the “best project,” the project that will provide the most returns. Economic development funding policies and programs aim to support the business that shows the “most promise.” This is an approach that assumes “equal treatment” of men and women.

### ***Gender Means Women's Issues***

In some instances, we heard gender is taken up as women's issues (typically, domestic violence and issues around responsibilities for child and elder care). An approach that considers women only in terms of typical women's issues is an approach that fails to recognize that gender relations are embedded in all social processes, and therefore, in most policy and program deliberations and actions.

### ***Gender Means Numbers***

Finally, gender seemed to be taken up as an issue of numbers — quotas in programs, or numbers of women on boards or advisory committees. When asked how gender was taken

into account in their policy-making process, many responded that when they did community consultations, they tried to have women represented, as they did also on boards or advisory groups.

In none of these approaches to gender is there an understanding of gender as a set of social relations which shape how power and privilege are distributed in society. At its best, GBA could bring a deep awareness to policy making at every level, from formulation, to implementation to monitoring and accountability. In our consultations, however, no one spoke of gender analysis practices within their units that helped them understand the differential impacts policies might have on women.

So it is fair to say that a commitment to gender equity initiatives is not embedded in the core principles within which policy makers operate. How can this be, when the federal government has a commitment to gender equality?

### **Problems with Gender-Based Analysis in Canada**

The SWC report (2001) illustrates the complexity of implementing GBA in various departments at the federal level. The report describes the process of mainstreaming gender through a GBA, saying there are three key dimensions: the political dimensions (Are the commitments “authoritatively stated and promoted?”), the institutional dimensions (“Are the appropriate structures in place?”) and the technical level. The report expressed some satisfaction with progress along the first two dimensions but indicated there is a “need for further development at the technical level in that attention must be paid to adapting concepts and methodologies for the range of policy sectors that are required to do effective gender-based analysis”(SWC 2001: 1). However, our research raises questions about all three dimensions.

Each department at the federal level, with assistance from SWC, has to develop its own tools and indicators, and it would appear GBA is unevenly taken up in the various federal departments (SWC 2001). The Department of Justice and Health Canada are two departments that have done considerable work to develop analytical tools and indicators within their jurisdictions, as has HRSDC. Many other departments are still developing analytical tools and mechanisms for implementation. They are hampered by a lack of data, knowledge and the capacity to undertake the analysis. There seems, in particular, to be little evidence of movement in economic policy, perhaps because of assumptions of gender neutrality in traditional economic theory.<sup>7</sup> There are parallel discourses within the field of public administration that similarly claim policy making is gender neutral.<sup>8</sup> These sorts of assumptions about neutrality stand in the way of genuine incorporation of gender analysis in the core operational principles of a department.

At the provincial level, mechanisms are even less developed. This suggests, and our research has shown, that when federal–provincial partnership agreements are entered into, there is likely to be very uneven awareness of gender equity issues, and gender analysis and indicators

are not routinely built into the policies and action frameworks that ensue from these agreements. We heard, for example, with the RDAs, there are no provincial mechanisms to require gender analysis or accountability for gender-inclusive outcomes. The provincial government needs to act to enhance the capacity and mandate of its gender-equality machinery.

### **What Is Required in the Gender Equity Machinery in Canada and Nova Scotia?**

#### ***Women-Specific Funding Initiatives Need to Be Supported***

When GBA was introduced as a federal policy in 1995, it was accompanied by the notion of mainstreaming gender. As part of this, programs for women were abandoned in many government departments, with the termination of many women-specific funding initiatives. To assist government departments to mainstream gender (i.e., to include gender analysis through all levels and processes), the plan was to implement GBA across all departments. However, as we have seen, the process of implementing GBA has been very slow. The effect has been that many departments at the centre of policies affecting rural women's access to jobs in the new economy have failed to address adequately the multiple and intersecting policy-related needs of rural women.

Given the slowness of implementing a mainstreaming approach across all departments and at all levels within provincial and federal systems, it is our view that the federal government abandoned much too soon its women-specific funding initiatives that had been embedded in policy. As we described above, in the EU, a similar critique has been made (see Rees 1998). Analysts there argue that until we live in a society without major gender inequities, there must be targeted programs for women *as well as* a systematic implementation of gender analysis at every level of the policy-making process (from research through formulation to implementation and monitoring and accountability).

Therefore, a major recommendation of this study is to re-establish women as a designated group in federal policy. From a policy perspective, it is important to continue women-specific programming initiatives and provide stable funding for women. "Naming women as a priority and reflecting this in the allocation of specific funds [is important] because it encourages the development of local labour market strategies that address gender and thereby make the circumstances and needs of women more visible" (Rees 1998: 156). This dual approach (policy-embedded designated group status women-specific programming coupled with mainstreaming through GBA) is necessary for as long as society is one where gender inequities exist (as measured through rates of poverty, employment patterns, wages, pensions and, within the household, gender divisions of labour).

#### ***Support and Sustain Organizations that Can Form a Women's Policy-Making Community***

For sound policy development, it is essential that those most affected by policy have a role in policy development. Input from community and other interest groups enters the policy development mix via the electorate and directly through lobbying efforts directed at political parties or upper-level government officials. Government can also engage in consultation with the public and interest groups at various stages in the process. Policy development depends so much on the voices at the table, but given the complexities of the policy-making



process,

it is difficult to have the right people at the right tables at the right times, with the ability to influence policy to best reflect the needs of, say, women or rural communities. Within this process, there arises a concern about the effectiveness with which the concerns of particular groups can be heard. It is not clear, moreover, how much attention policy makers give to gender analysis prepared by community advocacy groups. Several service providers we consulted doubted whether their voices were heard when they were invited to round tables or consultations on draft policies and discussion papers. Consultations often occur after the central themes of the policy have been set, and many service providers told us they felt policies were seldom changed to reflect what they had said.

One process that has hindered the ability of community groups to have an effective voice in policy making in Canada relates to the changing nature of federal and provincial relationships. Over the past decade, the federal–provincial policy-making context regarding social policy, training and economic development has been characterized by a profound realignment, with blurred boundaries, changing jurisdictional contexts, shifting responsibilities from the federal level to the provinces and multi-level governance. These processes make it difficult for community groups and advocacy groups to know where to direct energy to influence policy. Regarding the effect of this on women, Rankin and Vickers (2001: 16) said that in practice, there is no clear division of authority in the areas of policy making that most affect women. The “most frequent obstacle faced by women’s equality machinery in many countries is the frequent restructuring of governments...these frequent changes disrupt the continuity of national machineries” (p. 15).

Another central element in securing a voice for women in civil society is linked to the erosion of funding for community groups. Women’s centres and community learning programs have all seen core funding disappear. Staff cutbacks and the ongoing imperative to develop proposals for funding leave little room for advocacy. There needs to be reinstatement of core and multi-year funding so organizations have the time to marshal their experiences, wisdom and analysis and enter it into the policy-making process. Further, there needs to be a re-examination of the ways consultations with rural communities and women’s groups are organized.

### ***Accountability and Monitoring of Gender Equity Strategies and Outcomes***

A central flaw in the GBA approach is that it calls for analysis of policies, but does not seem to include expectations for actual decision making based on gender analysis, nor does it include expectations for outcomes that reflect strategies supportive of women’s economic and social security. In a consultation with a senior provincial policy maker, we explored the difference between GBA and gender-based decision making. We were told:

*Analysis is not outcome...you can do a lot of analysis and have no effect on anything.* [What is needed is a process of gender analysis that actually leads to

gender awareness in the decision-making process, with outcomes that actually] *advance fairness, equality and dignity for all women.*

Research needs to be done within the federal and provincial governments to determine the extent to which gender outcomes are built into action plans and strategies. Throughout this report, we have pointed to many instances where such accountability monitoring might be done.

The policy-making process has a research component, which must be based on an understanding of the complex social relations within which men and women's lives are differentially organized in Canadian society. Statistics Canada's publication *Women in Canada: A Gender-Based Statistical Report* (2000) provided basic demographic data on men and women, and the Knowledge Directorate of HRSDC provides data pertinent to its programs. We found that gender-disaggregated data were not at the forefront of thinking either in policy implementation or monitoring. The absence of effective gender analysis and gender-based decision making in the policy process in many departments (regional or provincial) may, in part, be explained by the lack of knowledge of the gender analysis process. Alternatively, it may be that there is insufficient availability and use of well-considered gender-disaggregated statistics in many departments and offices.

The *Framework for the Integration of Women in APEC* (APEC 2003) considered sex-disaggregated data to be

an essential input into gender analysis and the understanding of the different economic contributions, circumstances and realities of women and men... collected on the basis of concepts and methods that take into account women's and men's roles, realities, conditions and situations in all spheres and aspects of society, such as literacy education levels, business ownership, employment, wage differences, dependants, home and land ownership, loans and credit, debts.

This aspect of the collection of statistics is central: What lens is used to decide what statistics are worth collecting? Do the kinds of statistics collected and used by Industry Canada, for example, enable economic policy makers to examine fully the social infrastructure issues that impede the likelihood of rural women accessing and benefiting from economic programs and initiatives developed by Industry Canada, or in Nova Scotia, by the Office of Economic Development? We concur with Status of Women Canada (2001: 1) in its concern that in implementing GBA across all departments, "attention must be paid to adapting concepts and methodologies for the range of policy sectors."

The SWC (2001) report argued that central to developing sector-specific tools and mechanisms is the need for good gender-based research or "analytic inputs." Policy makers need accessible and timely research, require good baseline data and ongoing collection of gender-disaggregated statistics. The need for good gender-disaggregated statistics has arisen repeatedly in the literature we reviewed on federal and provincial policies. Many

authors we consulted have commented further that statistics need to be disaggregated not only by gender, but also, within gender (on rural women, African Nova Scotian women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women). Without statistics, conditions faced by women cannot be documented nor can progress be tracked. Without data, accountability is difficult to mandate and enforce. Without data, it is difficult to undertake effective gender-sensitive decision making in policy-making processes. Accountability and monitoring for gender outcomes need to be visible in annual progress reports.

If neither the gender nor rural lens is well integrated into federal policy making, and if at provincial and local levels the use of each lens is not formally required, then there is likely to be little awareness or understanding of women living in rural areas regarding the impact of, and gaps in, policies, strategies and action plans.

### **Key Summary Points**

- In many government units, there exists a shallow understanding of gender analysis.
- Gender mainstreaming has not succeeded as a strategy to support women's equality in Canada, and has led to the discontinuation of positive action programs for women.
- Effective gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by the re-establishment and expansion of women-specific funding initiatives by the federal and provincial governments.
- Gender-based analysis in the policy process needs to be reframed so decisions are made on the basis of gender analysis, and gender outcomes are built into accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
- The women's policy-making community needs to be strengthened by providing multi-year stable funding to women's equity seeking groups and by developing more effective consultation mechanisms.

## 9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many global economic strategies, taken to be the foundation of the new economy, have produced structural adjustments detrimental to women, particularly those women disadvantaged by poverty, disability, race, ethnicity or geography. Thus, care must be taken to develop policies that do not further marginalize these groups, but are inclusive of their needs and provide appropriate opportunities for their involvement. Through this study, we have determined that rural women in Nova Scotia face a range of challenges when attempting to access opportunities in the new economy. We have also learned that many of the policies that promote and develop the new economy do little to dismantle the challenges many rural women face. In fact, the majority of these policies were developed through exclusionary processes that considered neither their impact on women nor their impact on rural communities.

We examined a significant number of public policies and resultant programs to identify the key contributors to women's economic status. We also explored the kinds of policies necessary to facilitate rural women's full participation in the new economy. Through this process, we determined that the greatest challenges to women's full participation are found in economic policies that do not pay attention to rural women, social policies that are inadequate and exclusionary, and the lack of widespread integration of social, economic and employment policies. Inclusion will only be a reality if these policies are constructed within a system-wide framework of gender awareness and accountability. Overall system-wide policies and strategies must be implemented to identify places in the inter- and intra-governmental systems where the needs of particular groups of women are not met.

Women are invisible in economic policies in Nova Scotia and Canada. In fact, policy makers discount the very notion that gender has anything to do with economic policy. This infers that economic policy is unrelated to issues that fall within a social policy framework, such as child care and income assistance levels. We contend that the evidence demonstrates quite the opposite. The preference for gender-neutral policies has actually neglected women and worked against women's economic progress.

Based on our analysis of the public policies that promote and develop the new economy, we believe a range of policy reforms must be considered for rural women to participate fully.

### **1. Develop public policies, grounded in the principles of equality, that fully integrate gender-based analysis, planning and decision-making processes.**

Public policies, grounded in the principles of equality, would ensure that women become equal partners and participants in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policy and program development. Policies grounded in the principles of equality would ensure parallel provision of mainstream and targeted programs. Therefore, we recommend the following policy and program changes.

- Government policies need to reinstate women-specific funding programs to ensure support for training, skills development, and social and economic development

initiatives. Effective gender mainstreaming must be accompanied by specific funding programs for women by both federal and provincial governments.

- The Government of Canada needs to ensure that gender analysis is embedded in the policy-making process at the formative stage, at both the planning and decision-making stages, at the interpretation stage and, finally, when programs and strategies are implemented at either the national or regional level. Research and analysis must be ongoing throughout this process to discern, describe and resolve differing gender impacts.
- The Government of Nova Scotia needs to develop a gender equality policy that legislates that gender decision making is embedded in the policy-making process.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia must mandate the collection and use of gender-disaggregated research data throughout the policy-making process. The absence of gender analysis in the policy process can be explained, in part, by the lack of gender-disaggregated statistics. Without statistics, conditions faced by women cannot be documented nor can progress be tracked. Without data, accountability is difficult to mandate and enforce, and it is difficult to undertake effective gender analysis in policy-making processes.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should conduct studies to better profile rural women, making sure to include data on African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.
- Governments should ensure that enforceable gender equity measures (accountability, data collection, monitoring and evaluation methods) are built into their policies and resultant strategies, frameworks and funded programs.
- Governments must implement multi-year stable funding to support women's policy-making communities, to ensure more effective policy consultation mechanisms.

## **2. Develop economic policies that support rural women's full participation in the new economy.**

Economic policies for the new economy need to focus equitably on rural areas. Further, they need to be constructed within a system-wide framework of gender awareness and accountability to ensure that rural women are valued and included. Investing in women's entrepreneurship and women's community economic development means paying attention to issues, such as access to credit, non-standard work arrangements, child-care systems, access to ICT, employment benefits and social safety net programs. To invest in these is tantamount to investing in women's access to new economy opportunities.

- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should ensure a more equitable distribution of funds so policies and programs that stress innovation, research and development, technology transfer and growth and development equally benefit both

rural and urban Canada.

- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should establish gender equity policies for all publicly funded economic development agencies. These policies must ensure that accountability, gender-disaggregated data collection, monitoring and evaluation methods are built into their funding programs, and enforcement measures are in place to determine the impacts of programs on diverse rural women.
- The Government of Canada should require the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency to advocate for the principles of gender equality to ensure parallel provision of mainstream and targeted programs for women, in line with the Agency's legislated mandate to advocate for Atlantic Canada's interests, priorities and concerns in federal government policy making.
- The Government of Canada should fund research to increase the foundation of knowledge and understanding of women entrepreneurs and identify the systemic barriers they face.
- The Government of Canada should analyze the policy implications of the rising number of self-employed women in Canada and their economic contributions and status. Government must recognize the inequities inherent in current systems and seek to develop policies that would enable equity.
- The Government of Canada should ensure that economic programs address the specific issues women entrepreneurs face, such as access to micro-credit, employment benefits and social safety net programs, mentoring and networking opportunities, business skills training, information and government programs, and support for service-sector businesses.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should fully support women-centred community economic development as a viable strategy for rural women to access employment in the new economy by including women-centred community economic development in policies and programs.
- The governments of Canada and Nova Scotia should provide comprehensive funding mechanisms that support women-centred community economic development organizations as they build the operational, financial, technical and research capacity to create long-term training and employment opportunities for rural women to participate fully in the new economy.
- The Government of Canada must ensure that increased support for community-based economic development and the social economy announced in the March 2004 budget is developed through a gender lens, and the resulting programs are constructed within a gender-based framework.

### **3. Develop social policies that build a foundation for inclusion, innovation and equality.**

Social policy that supports women's access to the new economy must address such issues as quality early childhood education and care, income assistance inequities, quality job creation, employment benefits and lifelong learning.

- The Government of Canada must fully implement and fund a universal, high-quality, flexible early childhood education and care system, without which rural women will continue to be excluded from access to education and work in the new economy.
- The Government of Canada should reform eligibility rules under Employment Insurance to include self-employed women and more women in non-standard and part-time work.
- The Government of Canada should reform eligibility criteria under Employment Insurance to include those who are unemployed and outside the system. There is a lack of employment services in rural Nova Scotia that serve women other than those eligible for Employment Insurance.
- Governments should systematically gather gender-disaggregated statistics to permit analysis of the extent to which rural women benefit from current programs, and this information should include breakdowns on African Nova Scotia women, women with disabilities, Aboriginal women, Acadian women, immigrant women and other visible minority women.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should reform its social assistance policy to permit more than the current maximum of two-years, full-time post-secondary education for women on social assistance.
- The Government of Nova Scotia should reform its social assistance policy to ensure the implementation of long-term educational and employment strategies for women who need extensive training and transitional labour market programming.
- Governments should restore stable, long-term core funding to rural community learning and women's equality-seeking organizations to ensure the existence of a sustainable infrastructure on which to build community-based programming and policy development.
- Governments should restore multi-year project funding for community-based training and skills development programs in rural communities.
- Governments should provide direct, multi-year funding for local women's organizations to establish bridging programs that provide a wide range of support services, including skills training, upgrading, counselling, life-skills training, job search techniques, pre-employment programs and basic computer and economic literacy.
- Governments should establish sustainable, long-term funding to support technology access and training programs for women in rural communities. In particular, targeted

policies that support women's access to ICTs need to be established. These must include a focus on social facilitation, computer literacy, flexible programming that incorporates women's day-to-day experiences, and low-cost or free access to address the effects of the growing digital divide.

- The Government of Nova Scotia should support initiatives that expand the Nova Scotia Community College's capacity to address gender inequities: establish a gender equity officer positions, and develop a gender equity policy and initiatives that have been identified as helpful to rural women entering trades and technology programs (the provision of part-time programs, campus child care, pre-course math and science upgrading and a computer loan bank).
- Governments should work with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and local chambers of commerce in rural areas, drawing both on the local community college and local women's groups to develop awareness among employers of the value of employing women and of training female employees to facilitate their advancement in new economy jobs.
- Governments should ensure that better and more timely labour market information is available to rural areas through a variety of community-based and government agencies. Enhanced labour market transition services should be established to ensure proper guidance regarding new economy employment opportunities.
- Governments should take advantage of the opportunities presented in partnership agreements to advance a gender equity agenda by requiring partners to build gender equity strategies and outcome measures into agreements, such as those on post-secondary and workplace training.

#### **4. Develop economic and social policies that are inclusive of rural Canada and respectful of the requirements of rural communities.**

Economic and social policies must address the particular needs of rural Canada including, but not limited to, the need to enhance rural infrastructure. Current economic policies directly and indirectly place relatively greater emphasis on urban regions. This exacerbates urban-rural disparities and reinforces processes that lead to further underdevelopment in areas of rural Canada.

- Governments should ensure that a rural lens is used by all government departments when developing economic and social policies.
- Governments should establish accountability measures and monitoring processes to ensure rural areas are adequately considered in both funding allocations and program implementation in new economy initiatives. This includes the need to collect data regarding new economy outcomes in rural areas.
- Governments need to ensure the upkeep and development of rural infrastructure



(particularly transportation), to support access to new economy opportunities.

- The Government of Canada needs to realize a comprehensive telecommunications infrastructure for rural Canada.
- Governments must act to ensure rural citizens and businesses have access to ICTs through adequate and appropriate carriage facilities, devices, training, computer technologies and diverse content software.

## **APPENDIX A. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Our research design employed multiple methods (literature review, documentary analysis, interviews and statistical analysis) through four phases. Interview schedules were prepared and analyzed by the research team. Accepted ethical procedures regarding anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were observed.

### **Phase One: Literature Review and Analysis of Secondary Data**

The research began with a review of relevant policies, research studies and publications, including regional, national and international research pertaining to economic, social, educational and labour market development policy. We identified key policies and policy gaps that contribute to challenges for rural women in the new economy. An analysis of applicable secondary statistical data was conducted to prepare a statistical profile of rural women in Nova Scotia.

### **Phase Two: Policy Analysis and Interviews with Service Providers and Advocacy Groups**

In Phase Two, we continued analysis of key policies, documenting how implementation and accountability processes affect the participation of rural women in the new economy. We conducted interviews with front-line service providers, including geographically and culturally diverse advocacy groups (see below for list of agencies and organizations). Interviews with people who work directly with rural women, and who are often the interface between policy implementation and the actual conditions of women's lives, provided crucial insights into how policies impact on women's participation in the new economy and offered information on the kind of policy changes needed to facilitate women's participation.

### **Phase Three: Interviews with Policy Makers**

Phase Three focussed on verification and policy recommendations. Individual interviews were conducted with civil servants involved in policy development and implementation processes from a range of relevant departments in both federal and provincial jurisdictions (see below for list of departments and agencies). In the interviews, we verified our interpretations of policies, gained further understanding about how their work is shaped by priorities established nationally, regionally and provincially, and discussed the challenges they experience in shaping policy to respond to the documented needs of rural women. We also explored directions policy makers are taking and considering in the relevant policy areas, and exchanged ideas about more inclusive policies and policy development processes.

### **Phase Four: Development of Recommendations for Policy Initiatives**

In Phase Four, we developed policy recommendations and prepared a report summarizing results documented in previous phases. The report makes recommendations for changes in policies and their implementation and delivery related to economic policies, women-centred

CED, ICT, technology and small business development, education and skills development, social policies and programs.

### **Organizations, Agencies and Departments Consulted in the Interview/Consultation Process**

Representatives from the following organizations and agencies participated in the consultations:

- Antigonish Women’s Resource Centre
- Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health-Diversity Program
- Colchester Regional Development Agency
- Halifax Regional C@P Association
- L’Association des Acadiennes de la Nouvelle-Ecosse
- Lakeside Employment Resource Centre
- LEA Place Women’s Centre
- Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association
- Nova Scotia Disabled Persons Commission
- Sheet Harbour Job Search Centre
- Women’s Economic Equality (WEE) Society

Representatives from the following departments participated in the consultations:

- Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
- Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
- Nova Scotia Department of Education
- Nova Scotia Office of Economic Development
- Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
- Canadian Rural Partnership
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Health Canada
- Industry Canada

## **APPENDIX B. CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL AREAS**

### **Unemployment**

Unemployment rates are higher in most non-metro areas of Canada versus metro areas, except on the Prairies (Bollman 2001: 15). Rural unemployment rates are much higher in Atlantic Canada compared with elsewhere in Canada (Letourneau and McDermott 2001: 7). Census data show that in Nova Scotia in 1996, unemployment rates ranged from a low of 8.6 percent in the Halifax Regional Municipality to a high of 21.9 percent in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality with a combined rate of 19.3 percent in the three most-rural counties. It is important to note that unemployment rate data are often understated as they exclude people not looking for work.

### **Labour Force Participation**

Labour force participation has grown fastest in Atlantic Canada compared to other areas of Canada since the mid-1990s, although it still lags behind the national average. In Nova Scotia, labour force participation is highest in the Halifax region — 69 percent in August 2003 (Atlantic Provinces 2003).

### **Income**

Within each province, incomes in rural regions are lower than incomes in urban regions. A greater proportion of rural residents are concentrated in the bottom income classes and more rural residents are persistently poor, partly because of the higher percentage of seasonal or temporary (short-term) employment and low hourly wages (Vera-Toscano et al. 2001: 4). Rural-urban income disparity is highest in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Between 1980-1995, the Maritime provinces had a higher per capita rural income growth than any other provinces in Canada, but income disparity remains high mostly due to an increased incidence of low incomes in urban areas (Singh 2002: 1-7).

Rural areas have the lowest proportion of families with low incomes, based on LICO, but rural areas have the highest proportion of families with low incomes based on the Low Income Measurement (LIM)<sup>1</sup> (Rupnik et al. 2001: 19-21). People living with low incomes tend to belong to one of the following groups: females of working age, unattached individuals in one-person households, married with children under 25 and female lone parents (Vera-Toscano et al. 2001: 4). Rural families pay less in taxes (because they have lower incomes), and they receive more transfer payments through unemployment, pensions and the child tax credit (Bollman 2001: 60-62). According to 1996 Census data, Nova Scotia's three most-rural counties have the lowest average incomes in the province. The most urban, Halifax Regional Municipality, has the highest average incomes.

## **Out Migration**

Out migration rates are high in Atlantic Canada and in rural areas generally. Population declines from out migration in Nova Scotia range from minor to extreme, with increases taking place in concentrated areas within the rural counties of Hants, Kings, Colchester and Lunenburg (Hachey 2002). There is in migration and out migration of youth (ages 0 to 24) interprovincially and intraprovincially, in all areas of Nova Scotia. It is also clear that intraprovincially, the Halifax Regional Municipality (with four universities and three community college campuses) is the only area with positive net in migration of youth aged 18 to 24.<sup>2</sup>

## **Industry**

Rural and urban occupation and industry patterns are fairly consistent across the country. Rural areas tend to have a lower intensity of people working in producer services, such as finance, insurance, real estate, business services, construction and so on. Rural areas tend to have a higher intensity of people in the public and social services sector, such as education, health and all three levels of government. As well, non-metro employment is more heavily concentrated in the primary, resource-based and manufacturing sectors than metro employment (Bollman 2001: 51–54).

## **Education**

There is a definite rural/urban education gap. Rural Canada is generally less educated than urban Canada across all age groups, with a higher percentage of rural adults holding less than a high school degree and fewer university graduates. According to the International Adult Literacy Survey,<sup>3</sup> rural regions have lower literacy levels, in general, than urban areas and have a larger proportion of adults with very low literacy skills. Rural regions also have a low proportion of adults at the highest level of literacy, and lower training rates (Letourneau and McDermott 2001: 3-9). Nova Scotia statistics confirm the Canadian pattern: the education levels in rural Nova Scotia are lower than in urban areas (Rural Communities Impacting Policy 2003). High school leaving rates for Nova Scotia<sup>4</sup> show high graduation rates in some rural counties versus Metro Halifax, leading to the conclusion that the lower overall average educational attainment rates in rural areas likely have to do with the higher percentage of seniors, and youth out migration for higher education.

## APPENDIX C. WOMEN IN RURAL NOVA SCOTIA

### About the Data

Unless otherwise indicated, the data used for our profile were drawn from county-level data within community profiles of Statistics Canada, from the 2001 Census, and Nova Scotia Department of Finance, *Nova Scotia Statistical Review 2002* (sources noted under data tables). Community profiles provided us with the only way to get down to at least the county level for many indicators, making it possible to do some general rural/urban comparisons.

**Table C-1: Age Distribution for Metro, Non-Metro and Most-Rural Women, Nova Scotia**

Age Distribution	Metro by %	Non-Metro by %	Most-Rural by %
0–14	17.0	15.5	13.0
15–24	13.5	20.0	9.0
25–44	33.0	24.6	20.2
45–54	15.0	13.7	15.6
55–64	8.8	9.8	11.9
65–74	6.2	7.7	9.5
75 +	6.2	8.4	9.3

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Community Profiles, Nova Scotian counties. Collation of data completed by the authors.

**Table C-2: Employment, Participation and Unemployment Rates for Men and Women in Select Nova Scotia Areas**

Area	Employment Rate (Male)	Employment Rate (Female)	Participation Rate (Male)	Participation Rate (Female)	Unemployment Rate (Male)	Unemployment Rate (Female)
Halifax Regional Municipality	68.3	58.1	73.6	62.6	7.1	7.2
Cape Breton Regional Municipality	42.1	39.3	55	46.7	23.5	15.7
Colchester County	62.9	50.6	69.5	56.5	9.5	10.4
Richmond County*	40	37	56.1	47.6	28.7	22.1
Victoria County*	38.9	36	59.1	54.1	34.6	33.4
Guysborough County*	47	35.1	59.8	46.8	21.4	24.5

Note:

\* Nova Scotia's Most-rural counties.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Community Profiles, selected Nova Scotian counties. Collation of data completed by the authors.

**Table C-3: Female Highest Level of Schooling, by Age Group, Metro, Non-Metro and Most-Rural Areas**

Highest Level of Schooling	% of Metro	% of Non-Metro	% of Most Rural
<b>20-34 year olds</b>			
Less than high school	9.3	17	20
High school and some post-secondary	26.7	28.6	28.8
Trades or diploma	9	12.8	16.8
College certificate or diploma	20.3	22.8	18.5
University certificate, diploma or degree	34.8	18.6	15.9
<b>35-44 year olds</b>			
Less than high school	15.9	25.2	31.9
High school and some post-secondary	19.8	20	21.6
Trades or diploma	11.8	15.6	16.1
College certificate or diploma	23.7	23.3	20
University certificate, diploma or degree	28.9	15.6	10
<b>45-64 year olds</b>			
Less than high school	25.1	39	46
High school and some post-secondary	17.7	16.8	12
Trades or diploma	12	12.3	17.9
College certificate or diploma	21.3	17.8	12.5
University certificate, diploma or degree	24	13.9	11.5

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Community Profiles, Nova Scotian counties. Collation of data completed by the authors.

**Table C-4: Average Earnings for All Persons with Earnings and Working Full Time, Male and Female, Metro Halifax and the Three Most-Rural Counties**

County	Average Earnings for All Persons (Male) \$	Average Earnings for All Persons (Female) \$	Average Earnings (Full-Time, Male) \$	Average Earnings (Full-Time, Female) \$
<b>Metro</b>	37,013	23,908	47,546	33,597
<b>Guysborough</b>	24,051	13,609	35,615	27,990
<b>Victoria</b>	23,913	15,562	37,304	28,282
<b>Richmond</b>	26,656	15,644	43,105	26,007

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Community Profiles, selected Nova Scotian counties. Collation of data completed by the authors.

**Table C-5: Employment by Industry Sector, Metro, Non-Metro and Most-Rural (as actual numbers employed and percent of total)**

Industry Sector	Metro actual	% of Total	Non-Metro Actual	% of Total	Most-Rural Actual	% of Total
Agriculture	905	1	4500	3.9	365	6.7
Manufacturing	3895	4.2	11210	9.8	675	12.5
Wholesale/retail	14740	15.7	20330	17.8	795	14.7
Finance/real estate	7620	8.2	4860	4.2	175	3.2
Health/education	26765	28.6	34275	30	1510	27.8
Business services	16415	17.5	11650	10	400	7.4
Other	23200	24.8	27620	24.5	1500	27.7

Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census: Community Profiles, selected Nova Scotian counties. Collation of data completed by the authors.

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## ENDNOTES

### Chapter 1

- <sup>1</sup>. Community profiles were used as this was the only way to tie census data with urban and rural areas.
- <sup>2</sup>. There are various definitions of rural for statistical purposes. duPleiss et al. (2004) outline six main definitions, including rural and small town, OECD rural communities, OECD predominantly rural regions, Beale non-metropolitan areas and rural postal codes. Each definition uses different criteria to establish areas that are and are not rural:
  1. Census rural — people living outside centres of 1,000 or more.
  2. Rural and small town — people living outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres (areas with a population of 10,000 or more).
  3. OECD rural communities — people living in communities with less than 150 persons per square kilometre.
  4. OECD predominately rural — people living in census divisions where more than 50 percent of the population lives in an OECD rural community.
  5. Beale non-metropolitan region — people living outside centers of 50,000 or more.
  6. Rural postal code — people with 0 as the second character in their postal code.

As well, an Industry Canada document (2002) on the new economy classifies areas into metro and non-metro. Metro areas are Statistics Canada census metropolitan areas (CMAs) — areas with a population of 100,000 or more — and non-metro areas are the census agglomeration (CA) and rural areas that remain — areas with a population of less than 100,000 people.

### Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup>. Areas with a population of 100,000 or more people.
- <sup>2</sup>. Source: Statistics Canada (2001) Population Counts Showing Urban Population Size Groups and Rural Areas for Census Divisions. 93F0050XDB01009.
- <sup>3</sup>. Specifically, ICTs are the tools and services used to produce, distribute, transfer and exchange information over computer and satellite networks, such as radio, television, computers, telephones and cellular phones and Internet applications such as e-mail, e-commerce and chat rooms (Status of Women Canada 2003).
- <sup>4</sup>. Economists are divided about whether the new economy is a fundamental change to the way economies operate or simply productivity growth that takes place through previously existing economic channels. A moderate interpretation is recommended by most, acknowledging the role of technology, globalization and competition but rejecting the notion of deeper, fundamental changes to the economy (Stiroh 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Other formulations of necessary conditions include those outlined in *Stepping Up: Skills and Opportunities in the Knowledge Economy*, the report of the Expert Panel on Skills (Industry Canada 2000). It details six interconnected driving forces or success factors needed to consider the new economy as an ecological system: *skills* (the stock of skills Canadians currently possess and the learning systems that generate them); *knowledge* (the stock of knowledge available to Canadians and the systems that create this knowledge such as research, technology transfer and commercialization systems); *structures for action* (these structures provide the way for people to come together, set goals and work to achieve them); *commitment to success* (attitudes and expectations of citizens and government and the willingness to share resources, collaborate and achieve success in the new economy); *exchange networks* (these include transportation systems and telecommunications infrastructure to move ideas, services, information, people and products); *public policy infrastructures* (these include the full range of government policies, such as taxation, immigration, and health and welfare that affect economic and social development, wealth creation, distribution and quality of life in a region or country).

<sup>6</sup> Beaudin and Breau (2001: 109-110) cited an analysis by Robert Lacroix, who provides an example of a high tech firm in Montréal that employs people with qualifications in philosophy, history, design, literature and creativity. Similar creative skill breadth is required of managers who must deal with patents, with regulatory agencies, with intellectual property rights, with relations with investors, strategic alliances, marketing technology transfer and international regulations.

<sup>7</sup> This categorization maintains the age-old dualism between mental and manual labour, with the assumption that somehow manual labour is devoid of knowledge. This ideological stance is only possible with a particular view of what counts as knowledge in a knowledge-based economy.

<sup>8</sup> For each of their job categories, Beaudin and Breau (2001: 94-95) provided examples: *knowledge jobs* — generators of new knowledge, such as scientists, computer analysts and artists, lawyers, consultants, auditors; *management jobs* — creative and practical aspects of knowledge where workers are required to produce simultaneously new information and implement and exploit it, such as health care managers, retail sales managers, engineering services managers; *data processing jobs* — the users of new knowledge, such as teachers, sales clerks, secretaries, accounting clerks, engineering and drafting technologists; *service delivery jobs* — writers, security guards, caretakers, cooks, hairdressers, police officers; *goods manufacturing jobs* — the processing of materials, such as mechanics, fish processing plant workers, carpenters, truck drivers; and *data services jobs* — data processing and service delivery work, such as, nurses, social workers, human resource consultants.

<sup>9</sup> Beaudin and Breau (2001) noted that this categorization by industry/enterprise did not include public sector non-commercial enterprises, thus it excludes 210,000 jobs.

<sup>10</sup> Using Beaudin and Breau's (2001: 97) second typology (type of work), the first category (knowledge jobs)

occupies a rather modest place in the economy of the Atlantic Provinces. In 1996 these accounted for only 6.2 percent of the region's employment compared with 8.3 of the nation's.... [Further], over half of these jobs (58 percent) came from the social and human science category (lawyers, consultants etc.) while 32 percent were linked to the pure and applied sciences (physicists, engineers, agronomists, biochemists etc.) and 10 percent to computer analysis and programming.

<sup>11</sup> In 2002, there were 40 different companies operating call centres in Nova Scotia, some with call centres in several locations, for 46 call centres, employing a total of 14,140 people. The call centres vary in size, with the number of employees ranging from 20 to 2,300. These numbers vary depending on whether the call centre is operating at full capacity. About 52 percent of call centre employment is centred in the Metro Halifax area. Other call centres are dispersed throughout the province, generally in small towns and within the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (N.S. Department of Finance 2003: 241-242). The most rural location for a call centre is the recent March 2003 announcement of a 25 to 50 seat call centre for the Canso area.

<sup>12</sup> Several factors contribute to the pull that urban centres hold for knowledge-based industries. Polese and Shearmur (2002) claimed that technological change has facilitated the geographic concentration of employment in larger urban centres. As well, they point out that knowledge-intensive industries tend to locate in or near large urban centres. They say that knowledge-based institutions are sensitive to volume; the density of the knowledge-based work force is linked to the availability of research centres, technical training facilities, laboratories and the like.

<sup>13</sup> Through our consultations, we learned that CAP sites must apply for funding and can use the money for human resources, projects or for upgrading their equipment. It is neither core nor long-term funding. It is difficult to ascertain what is offered in each CAP site with respect to training or programs. With heavy reliance on volunteers, and the limited funding and project-based nature of the funding, any type of study would be quickly out of date.

### **Chapter 3**

<sup>1</sup> Migration and out-migration estimates can be found in the Nova Scotia Department of Finance (2002: 24-29).

<sup>2</sup> According to a study of 25 female call centre workers, "the industry has grown with no public policies in place to foster the interests of the largely female workforce" (Putnam et al. 2000: 1). Employees report having very little control over their work. The work is often low-paying, part-time, with little job security. The rotating shift work scheduling is difficult for families. The tasks are routine, tedious and repetitive. Transportation is an issue for some women, as shifts do not always coincide with bus schedules.

<sup>3</sup> The factors that contribute to women's poverty and economic inequality are interrelated and are summarized by Day and Brodsky (1998: 7). These included women's unpaid role of

caregiver, which either constrains women's participation in the labour force or doubles the burden they carry; low pay, based on the fact that work traditionally seen as "women's work" is lower paid than "men's work"; the lack of affordable and safe child care; the fact that women are more likely than men to have non-standard jobs with no job security, union protection or benefits; and the entrenched devaluation of the labour of women of colour, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

<sup>4</sup> Currently, transportation subsidies available to social assistance recipients in Nova Scotia are tied to employment-related activities. This means that women who stay home with their children, for example, do not get any money for transportation to town to meet basic needs like buying groceries. Tying transportation to employment also means there are not transportation allowances for women who need to meet medical emergencies. According to MacDougall (2003), women face difficulties in getting the transportation allowances, and they report that what is required to prove transportation costs in some areas is unreasonable and demeaning.

<sup>5</sup> By 1999, two thirds of upper-income households had Internet access compared to only one fourth of low-income Canadians (Reddick et al. 2000).

<sup>6</sup> For example, many employers put their job descriptions and application forms on-line and invite (often expect) résumés to be submitted on-line. Many government departments, including HRSDC and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, are replacing print resources with on-line resources. The Department of Community Services has made the policy details available on-line, but this is not a format easily accessed by women on assistance, those most affected by the policies (MacDougall 2003).

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup> A recent study in Nova Scotia (MacDougall 2003) showed that the monthly social assistance allotment for child care is inadequate and does not fully cover the actual costs.

<sup>2</sup> Diane Elson described (1994: 42) the issues thus: In traditional economics there is a dichotomy between the productive economy (making a profit, covering costs) and the reproductive economy (meeting human needs, sustaining human beings). Within feminist economics, this dichotomy is erased.

This is the point at which macro-economics is male-biased. It is not that macro-policy reforms are deliberately designed to favour men.... The key issue is that macro-economics has a one-sided view of the macro-economy: it considers only the monetary aggregates of the 'productive economy.' It ignores the human resource aggregates of the 'reproductive economy,' the indicators of population, health, nutrition, education, skills. This one-sided view of the macro-economy is a male-biased view, because the sexual division of labour means that women are largely responsible for the 'reproductive economy' as well as contributing a great deal of effort to the 'productive economy.'



- <sup>3</sup>. Several reports address issues arising from changes in federal legislation between 1996 and 2000 and all propose policy directions: National Women's Reference Group (1999) and Critoph (2002), both prepared for the National Women's Reference Group; Townson (2003) and Day and Brodsky (1998) both prepared for Status of Women Canada.
- <sup>4</sup>. The Annual EI Monitoring and Assessment Report (HRDC 2003) uses three different approaches to examine the issue of access to the EI program: a simulation of the proportion of those currently employed who would be eligible for EI should they lose their job; a calculation of the proportion of unemployed individuals, previously working, who are potentially eligible for EI, and a calculation of the proportion of all unemployed individuals who receive EI benefits, known as the benefit to unemployment BU ratio. From our perspective, the third approach more accurately reflects the reality of people living in rural communities, because it gives a greater sense of the percentage of the unemployed who are actually able to take part in the EI program. The Critophe study appears to calculate access using the BU ratio. According to HRDC, the BU ratio declined slightly from 47 to 45.5 percent in 2002-2003.
- <sup>5</sup>. Non-standard work includes a range of forms of work: part time, contract, self-employed, just-in-time, contingent, and seasonal. Reasons cited for increased rates of non-standard work in Canada are globalization, increasing demand for work-force flexibility, worker preference, and a rise in the service economy (Schellenberg and Clark, 1996, cited in Townson 2003: 11). Many have begun to argue that the term "non-standard work" relegates to the margins, what is increasingly a standard form of work for Canadians.
- <sup>6</sup>. Moving from a system based on eligible weeks to one based on hours has a negative effect on women who depend on part-time work. In 1999, 28 percent of Canadian women worked part time, versus 10 percent of men. Since the mid-1970s, women have accounted for seven in ten of all part-time employees (Statistics Canada 2000: 103). Women work part time for a variety of reasons, sometimes to accommodate caregiving and household responsibilities (an issue compounded by the lack of affordable and quality child care and elder care). As well, especially in rural communities, many rural women are working part time, because of a lack of full-time work (Curto and Rothwell 2003). Under the revised EI regulations (post Bill C-2) a new entrant needs 910 hours to be eligible for EI, based on an average of 35 hours a week for 26 weeks. "For women who average 30 hours, the qualifying time is longer. For part-timers averaging 20 hours, they will need 45 weeks and will likely not qualify." (CLC 2003: 6). The rate of EI benefits paid is higher for claimants with higher wages and greater number of hours worked each week. Hence, the benefit period rewards workers who have the luxury of working full time, overtime or longer hours.
- <sup>7</sup>. Maternity and parental EI requirements favour full-time workers who have the required number of weeks, have access to higher benefits and receive those benefits for a longer period of time. Women who work part time and temporary contract work are again disadvantaged by regulations concerning maternity and parental benefits, and women working in self-employment are not able to access maternity and parental benefits at all.
- <sup>8</sup>. According to the Canadian Labour Congress, changes to the system have transferred

money out of dependent communities and into federal government general revenues, and these changes have been especially hard on women. Between 1993 and 1998, systemic changes have cut more than one million workers from insurance coverage. In 1988, unemployment coverage for unemployed women was more than 70 percent. Ten years later, by 1998, unemployment coverage for women was close to 30 percent. In other words, we have gone from a situation where seven out of ten unemployed women were covered to only three out of ten. Those losses translate into over 300,000 unemployed women each year who are unable to get EI coverage. Age also plays a part in these losses; only 28 percent of women under age 45 were covered by EI in 1998 after the implementation of the new regulations (CLC 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Between 1995 and 1998, the gradual withdrawal from, and ultimate termination of, funding for training under the consolidated revenue funding, had a major impact on training and related programs for women (Critoph 2002). This money had paid for the majority of programs for designated groups, which at that time included women. With the virtual elimination of consolidated revenue funding, EI (Part II) (through the LMDAs) became the only substantive federal source of funding for training.

<sup>10</sup> With the reduction of community-based organizations delivering support and training in Nova Scotia, many women have to turn to private training organizations. But urban-rural disparities exist. In 2003 in Nova Scotia, 45 colleges were approved under the *Private Colleges Regulatory Act*. There are no approved private colleges in smaller and rural locations other than Sydney, Truro, Glace Bay, Antigonish and Kentville. All the rest are in Halifax Dartmouth. Most of the private training opportunities in the small towns address occupational skill needs that would not be considered jobs in the knowledge-based economy (e.g., hair dressing, cosmetology, child care assistant, teaching assistant). Those linked to the knowledge-based economy provide entry-level skills, covering basic word-processing skills and accounting, paralegal services.

<sup>11</sup> Townson (2003: 1) citing Statistics Canada 2000 tables, said:

Overall, women are much more likely than men to be employed in non-standard jobs, and the percentage of women in these jobs has been increasing. In 1999, 41 percent of women's jobs [41 percent of employed women aged 15 to 64] compared to 29 percent of men's jobs fell into the category of non-standard employment. Ten years earlier, in 1989, 35 percent of employed women aged 15 to 64, compared with 22 percent of employed men in the same age group had a non-standard employment arrangement.

Townson went on to note that age is also a factor in non-standard work. More young women and older women are likely to be in non-standard work (younger ones mainly because they are combining education and work, the older ones to supplement pension income). For women in other age groups, reasons for engaging in non-standard work would be child rearing responsibilities and family/elder care responsibilities.

## Chapter 7

- <sup>1</sup> Such claims can be found in documents from the OECD, the EU, International Adult Literacy Study as well as in many Canadian documents, including *Knowledge Matters* (HRDC 2001) and *Skills Nova Scotia: Framework* (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002).
- <sup>2</sup> The Nova Scotia government, as part of its *Skills Nova Scotia: Framework* (N.S. Dept. of Education 2002), referred frequently to partnerships with business and industry, including initiatives with sectoral councils. It cites as an example that “the province is supporting the delivery of essential skills education programs to over [sic] 1,000 employees at over 40 businesses each year. The delivery of this initiative is done in partnership with business and labour.”
- <sup>3</sup> Partnership is a key theme in all policy documents. Common suggestions in various discussions of partnership opportunities are customized training (Beaudin and Breau 2001) and increased use of co-op programs because of the need for workers with high levels of experience. The *Skills Nova Scotia: Framework* mentions customized training as a model, and Construction Trades Skills Initiatives, and the Older Worker Pilot Project Initiative as examples. The initiatives usually involve several partners: a recently negotiated partnership spearheaded by the Skills and Learning Branch of the Department of Education involves a local food bank, HRDC and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services (targeting workers on either EI or social assistance), to deliver a basic skills program from the Nova Scotia School of Adult Learning for upgrading of basic skills and a community college program to develop specific trade skills.
- <sup>4</sup> The Equality in Technology Project was funded jointly through HRDC and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

## Chapter 8

- <sup>1</sup> A review of gender-equity mechanisms by Status of Women Canada (2001) described the official policy shift in the mid-1990s from a women’s issues approach to a GBA approach. International conferences, such as the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and international agreements (e.g., CEDAW 1979) provided the impetus for Canada to develop its GBA approach.
- <sup>2</sup> Gender-based analysis is “an approach to policy-making grounded in a belief that formal equality — the same treatment for men and women under public policy — does not guarantee equality of results for both genders”(Rankin and Vickers 2001: 29–31). Gender-based analysis documents men’s and women’s experiences to show the differential impacts of policy.
- <sup>3</sup> It is rare for analysis of discourse and ideology to be brought to the policy-making process. Yet, key concepts and terminology, while often used in a taken-for-granted way (Smith 1990), are threaded through with assumptions and meanings, which carry the weight of culture, custom and bias. On a daily basis, policy makers and policy analysts, whether within federal or provincial government departments, in governmental agencies (such as

ACOA), or in business or industry associations (such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business) use terms which, while assumed to be neutral, on deeper analysis can be found to contain assumptions that reinforce gender divides. In equity and diversity initiatives, therefore, it is wise to consider the extent to which prevailing terms in the discourse carry gendered assumptions. When policies contain terms that remain unexamined for implicit gender meanings, the policies, and the frameworks and strategies developed from those policies can contain biases, which may work against the equity-seeking intentions of the organizations concerned. For example, feminist analysis has shown how concepts such as “skill” and “technology” carry gendered meanings (Cockburn and Ormrod 1993; Clarke 2000; Croissant 2000; Faulkner 2001). Such popular meanings are often subtle and implicit

in the associations people bring to their understanding of, for example, what technology is and who might best be suited for work in technological fields. A gender-based analysis in any policy development activity, whether in a business, an educational institution or a government department, would invite participants to scrutinize assumptions embedded in their use of the language of technology and technological change. This sort of examination of prior assumptions takes time, usually not possible in brief overviews of gender issues in policy-making. Where gender is discussed in economic policy-making contexts or education and training contexts, it is more likely to be in the framework of “getting more women in,” rather than examining the fundamental terms and concepts for their embedded gender assumptions. Without addressing this discourse-embedded bias in every jurisdiction and at every administrative level, the bias simply enters the reports, policy decisions, rolling out of strategies and action plans and, ultimately, the delivery at the front line. Terms that carry implicit gendered meanings constitute an unintentional and hidden barrier which impedes women’s access to jobs in the New Economy.

<sup>4</sup> In Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy, there is a legal requirement for some types of positive action programs, and the state offers financial incentives to employers offering such programs (Rees 1998).

<sup>5</sup> We make a distinction here between federal or provincial commitments to employment equity programs in hiring and positive action programming for women provided through various departments. Women are considered a target group for employment equity within the federal government under the *Employment Equity Act*, but have not remained embedded in policy for specific public program funding.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that within the federal civil service, women are very visible in senior positions. This may create a climate that masks the extent to which in society at large, the conditions under which many women work are shaped strongly by sexism and patriarchal practices of subordination.

<sup>7</sup> Many feminist economists have articulated a critique of economics that demonstrates its fully gendered character (see Waring 1988; Elson 1994; MacDonald 1994). These feminist economists also demonstrate the kinds of questions that need to be asked by economists to ensure women are not unfairly impacted by economic policy.

<sup>8</sup>. Policy-making theory and discourse assume neutrality of processes. In fact the notion of neutrality is at the core of public administration discourse. Rankin and Vickers (2001: 24) referenced Burt (1995) in their claim that “policy disciplines — especially economics, political science and public administration — see almost all issues as gender neutral.” The assumption that policies are both gender neutral and diversity neutral is in direct contradiction to feminist analysis that points to the gendered assumptions built into terms, such as technology and skill. Thus, working on gender analysis with people in public administration requires shifting the ethos away from the notion that policies are gender neutral and the assumption that the best way to ensure equality is to treat everyone the same. When a civil service is trained in theories and practices that assume gender neutrality in policy-making procedures, the implementation of GBA ends up being undertaken in environments where people have neither the will nor the knowledge base to undertake this (Rankin and Vickers 2001; Burt 1995).

## **Appendix B**

<sup>1</sup>. A low income cutoff measure or LICO is set by Statistics Canada as an indicator of people in straitened circumstances. It is measured by the percent of income spent on basic necessities, and the cut-off varies depending on size of family, and area in which family is located. The Low Income Measure or LIM equals half of adjusted median family income, where the adjustment is made in consideration of family size.

<sup>2</sup>. Based on migration estimates from the Nova Scotia Department of Finance (2002), Nova Scotia Statistical Review, Migration Estimates by Age Group, Nova Scotia Region and County, 1996-1997 to 2000-2001 and Migration Estimates by Type of Migration and Sex, Nova Scotia, by Region and County, 1996-1997 and 2000-2001, pages 24-29.

<sup>3</sup>. This gap may be partially explained through the data which shows that the rural Canada population tends to be older than the urban population, but this is not the sole factor. Youth out migration might also explain some of this gap, if the youth leaving rural areas tend to be the most educated. This brain drain has long been identified as an issue for lagging regions.

<sup>4</sup>. Nova Scotia high school graduation rates for 2000-2001 are from the Department of Education Web site <[stats-summary.ednet.ns.ca/grad.shtml](http://stats-summary.ednet.ns.ca/grad.shtml)>. Graduation rates are the percentage of students who receive a high school diploma compared to the number of students in Grade 9 three years earlier.

**Projects Funded Through Status of Women Canada's Policy Research Fund  
Call for Proposals Restructuring in Rural Canada: Policy Implications  
for Rural Women \***

*A National Research Project on the Impact of Restructuring on Rural, Remote and Northern Women's Health: Policy Issues, Options and Knowledge Translation*

Ivy Lynn Bourgeault, Christine Dallaire, Lorraine Greaves, Barb Neis and Rebecca Sutherns

*The Impact of Long Term Care Patient Classification Systems on Women Employed as Caregivers in Rural Nursing Homes*

Belinda Leach and Bonnie C. Hallman

*Rural Women's Experiences of Maternity Care in British Columbia: Implications for Policy and Practice*

Jude Kornelson, Lana Sullivan, Ann Pederson and Stefan Grzybowski

*Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy: A Gender Analysis*

Carla Roppel, Annette Aurélie Desmarais and Diane Martz

National Farmer's Union Women

*Hidden Actors, Muted Voices: The Employment of Rural Women in Canadian Forestry and Agri-food Industries*

Diane Martz, Maureen Reed, Ingrid Brueckner and Suzanne Mills

***Public Policy and the Participation of Rural Nova Scotia Women in the New Economy***

**Ann Manicom, Janet Rhymes, Nan Armour and Doreen Parsons**

**The Women's Economic Equality (WEE) Society in partnership with the Hypatia Project**

\* Some of these papers are still in progress and not all titles are finalized.