



*Plan of Action
2003-2004*

*Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Message from Minister

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan builds on the accomplishments of the past year, and continues to provide for research and policy advice to shape public policy that is responsive to the needs of women in Nova Scotia.

The goals of social inclusion, economic equality, personal safety and freedom from violence, and improved health for women and their families reflect what the Council continues to hear from women in all parts of the Province. I look forward to Council's advice and accomplishments in the coming year.



Jane Purves

Minister responsible for the administration of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act

Message from Chair

As my term as Chair of the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women draws to a close, I am pleased to present the business plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Council members and staff are dedicated to the mission of advancing equality, fairness and dignity for all women. In our opinion, this business plan will further that mission in the coming year, and shape government policies and programs that touch the lives of women throughout Nova Scotia.



Rita Warner
Chair

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

1.1 *Mandate and Mission*

The mandate of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women derives from the statute establishing the Council. Section 4(1) requires the Council to advise the Minister and to bring forward the concerns of women in Nova Scotia. Section 4(2) defines the powers of the Council, which may:

- ▶ receive and hear petitions and suggestions concerning the status of women
- ▶ undertake and recommend research on matters relevant to the status of women
- ▶ recommend and participate in programs concerning the status of women
- ▶ propose legislation, policies and practices to promote equality of opportunity and status
- ▶ publish reports, studies and recommendations

Mission

- ▶ To advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia

1.2 *Planning Context*

The Advisory Council will build on a number of successful initiatives of 2002-2003 during the coming year.

The effectiveness of Council members as advisers to the Minister specifically and government more generally has a solid base because of the experience and commitment of Council members, supported by the orientation and training activities carried out in 2002-2003. Additionally, various activities—the 25th anniversary forum, the national meeting of Advisory Councils, a high-profile program of events for International Women’s Day, and success with workshops on women in politics, for example—have heightened public and media awareness of the Council and its work. This, in turn, has resulted in an expansion of opportunities for collaboration with government, community and academic partners to address the strategic goals of the Advisory Council, in areas of inclusion and participation, economic equality, personal safety and freedom from violence, and improved health.

The community forums and workshops of the past year have had several consistent messages:

- “Do this more often!” Women need to meet to define the important issues in their lives, to keep them on the public agenda, and to be involved in the policy process.
- Ensure that the intersection of gender with other sources of diversity—race, poverty, aboriginal status, sexual orientation, immigrant or refugee status, age, family status—is considered in all the work done by Council.

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- Ensure that young women are “brought to the table”, and that Council actively reaches out to them.
- Our successes over the past generation sometimes obscure the ongoing inequality that women still face. Ensure that we identify these issues, and provide opportunities to look for solutions.

The complexity of the issues women confront—in education and the economy, in family life, in the justice system, in their health and well-being—require cross-sectoral approaches. Through work to increase the number of women in trades and technology occupations, through collaboration in the Skills Agenda and the Innovation Strategy, through work to address Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, HIV/AIDS, or the many issues arising from violence against women, Council’s work consistently requires the formation and maintenance of collaborative relationships to further progress toward women’s full equality.

During the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the agency will continue to face serious financial challenges. While efforts to seek partnerships and sponsorships have been helpful in covering costs of special events or publications, an expected increase in rental costs cannot be met within the current budget, nor can increases in salaries and benefits. Thus, maintenance of core functions will be a key challenge for the coming year.

2.0 Strategic Goals

The Advisory Council members have defined the following strategic goals for the work of the agency:

Inclusion

- ▶ To increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

Economic Equality

- ▶ To promote women’s economic equality.

Elimination of Violence Against Women

- ▶ To reduce violence against women in communities, workplaces, and families.

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Health and Well-Being

- ▶ To improve the health and well-being of women and their families.

Key contributions of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women to the overall priorities of government are as follows:

- Through a commitment to the **inclusion** of marginalized groups, the work of the Advisory Council supports effective and efficient utilization of government resources. For example, by collaborating on a provincial HIV/AIDS strategy, we ensure that the fact that the fastest-growing rate of infection is among 15-19 year-old heterosexual women is addressed through the inclusion of best practices in prevention. Similarly, ensuring that racialized groups are specifically recruited and selected in programs to promote women in trades supports government goals in education and economic opportunity. Overall, the Advisory Council's recommendations in a wide range of policy areas affecting women ensure that the specific concerns of women can be voiced and taken into account.
- The Advisory Council on the Status of Women promotes the **education** of women, with a particular focus on trades and technology, where women are under-represented at the same time that serious skills shortages are recognized by business and industry throughout Nova Scotia. Operational plans in this area include participation in the work of the Nova Scotia Skills Agenda, and collaboration with community-based organizations such as the Women's CED Network, Techsploration and Hypatia.
- Council's work promoting education is closely linked to government priorities in **economic development**. Additionally, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women takes part in the Sustainable Communities Initiative, works closely with Nova Scotia Women's FishNet, and, at the level of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Forum of Status of Women Ministers takes part in strategic planning to promote woman-friendly workplace cultures in high-growth, well-paying occupations.
- Council's work promotes improved health for Nova Scotian women and their families in a number of ways. First, the \$1.7 million CIHR-funded Healthy Balance Research Program is now in its third year, and in FY 2003-04, dissemination of research results on the situation of caregivers in Nova Scotia will become available to policy audiences, community groups and the general public. Council will work to include consideration of women in the Province's strategy for HIV/AIDS in FY 2003-04. As well, Council will promote the United Nations Global Campaign Against Violence in this province by advocating for a perspective on violence as a public health problem that requires strong prevention initiatives.

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3.0 Core Business Areas

1. Policy & Research

Advises Minister on concerns and priorities of women, and formulates strategies and options to address these. Conducts quantitative and qualitative research in consultation with academic and community groups and government departments to ensure advice is a feasible, relevant, timely and accurate guide to governmental action.

2. Information & Education

Collects and disseminates information on women's issues to Minister, Council, staff, and other key stakeholders including media and the general public. Through a comprehensive communications strategy, informs and influences key stakeholders about issues and concerns affecting women, and about Council and government priorities, activities, accomplishments and opportunities for improvement in addressing women's issues.

3. Community Liaison & Rural Outreach

Through the Council members and the Field Work Program, brings forward concerns of women from across Nova Scotia, with particular attention to historically disadvantaged groups. Partners with communities and agencies to advance equality for women in programs and services.

4.0 Priorities 2003/2004

1. Policy & Research

- ▶ Provide research and policy advice, to both provincial and federal governments, on issues affecting women, through collaboration with government and community partners.
- ▶ Maintain Council effectiveness through promoting diversity of council membership and supporting members' active engagement in their communities to enable them to bring forward the concerns of women to relevant policy audiences.
- ▶ Inform and influence public policy related to caregiving and unpaid work by disseminating results of the Healthy Balance research program, as they become available, to community, policy, and academic audiences.

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2. Information & Education

- ▶ Ensure public awareness of Council accomplishments and positions through appropriate communications plans and actions. Continue to mark International Women’s Day, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and Women’s History Month.
- ▶ Provide timely, accurate, and useful information about matters of concern to women to a wide variety of internal and external audiences.

3. Community Liaison & Rural Outreach

- ▶ Increase women’s leadership and participation in public affairs through the design and delivery of public information materials and workshops.
- ▶ Address the strategic goals of the Advisory Council through collaborative projects with community, government, and academic partners.

5.0 Budget Context

Estimated Budget Expenditures		
	Forecast 2002\03 (Per 2003\04 Estimates Book)	Budget 2003\04 (Per 2003\04 Estimates Book)
	\$Thousands	\$Thousands
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	\$646.0	
Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	\$646.0	
Salaries and Benefits	473.80	
Funded Staff (FTEs)	7.8	

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6.0 *Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology and Communications*

Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology functions are carried out on behalf of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women by the Department of Justice. This enables the Advisory Council to function with minimal expenditure for administrative overhead.

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7.0 Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Core Business Area: Policy and Research

Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year Measure	Target 2003/2004	Target 2004/2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Sustained effectiveness of Advisory Council	Ability to meet legislated mandate of advising Minister and bringing forward concerns of women	Council member self-ratings of participation in community (1 to 10)	Average of 7.15 out of 10 in first half of FY 2002/03	Average of 7 or higher out of 10	Average of 7 or higher out of 10	Promote diversity of Council membership and support members' active engagement in their communities
	High quality advice to government on ways to further women's equality	Ministerial satisfaction with work of Council	high	high	high	Provide research and policy advice that is timely, accurate and useful.

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Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Information and Education						
Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year Measure	Target 2003/2004	Target 2004/2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Public awareness of Council initiatives	Web site usage	Tracking of Council Web site visits	30,000 Web site visits in first half of FY2002-03	50,000 + Web site visits	50,000 + Web site visits	Maintain and enhance Council Web site, responding to identified information needs. Publish electronic newsletter bi-weekly. Post all Council publications to web site.
	Information and referral requests	Tracking of requests by all staff	675 requests for first half of FY2002-03	1200-1500 + requests	1200-1500 + requests	Through community liaison and rural outreach, information programming and media relations, provide for public awareness of Council and its work.
	Media coverage of Council events, publication releases, etc.	Tracking of print media stories related to Council's work	28 print stories in first half of FY2002-03	Minimum of one print story per month	Minimum of one print story per month	Ongoing media scan and collaboration with government, community and academic partners to identify relevant issues. Communications planning and implementation to ensure coverage of Council positions and events.
Public support and satisfaction with Council's work	Demand for Council publications	Tracking of publications requested by public, NGOs, etc., as well as those downloaded from website	8500 PDF downloads alone in first half of FY2002-03	5000+ requests for publications (hard copy and PDF downloads combined)	5000+ requests for publications (hard copy and PDF downloads combined)	Provide timely, accurate and useful information about matters of concern to women for a wide variety of internal and external audiences.

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Outcomes: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women						
Core Business Area: Community Liaison and Rural Outreach						
Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year Measure	Target 2003/2004	Target 2004/2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Increased participation of women in public affairs	Level of interest by women in women's leadership workshops and public information materials	Participants' level of satisfaction with workshops and public information materials	Participants' evaluation of initial workshop series (2002-03) was overwhelmingly positive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 98.4% of participants would recommend or definitely recommend the workshop to others - 93.4% were interested in future workshops on women's political participation. 	85% or more of participants/users indicate a high level of satisfaction	85% or more of participants/users indicate a high level of satisfaction	Continue workshops to enhance and promote women's leadership and participation in public affairs. Develop materials specific to the needs of Nova Scotian women who are interested in becoming more politically active.
	Workshop effectiveness	Workshop effectiveness as measured by attendees' plans to participate in public affairs	A substantial number of participants in the initial series of workshops indicated an increase in their future level of political participation in 4 political domains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community (35%) - municipal (48%) - provincial (35%) - federal (43%) 	At least 25% of women indicate plans to participate in public affairs	At least 25% of women indicate plans to participate in public affairs	