



*Plan of Action
2006-2007*

*Nova Scotia Advisory Council on
the Status of Women
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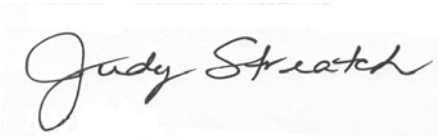
Message from Minister

I am pleased to share the Advisory Council on the Status of Women's business plan for 2006-07. The plan reflects Council's mandate to provide research-based advice to shape public policy in order to better serve the needs of Nova Scotia women.

Council's plan builds on the success and accomplishments of past years, especially with such initiatives as the campaign school for women, the Women, Work and Care forum, the release of sexual assault statistics, and the Healthy Balance Research Program studies.

These initiatives demonstrate Council's achievement through partnerships, dedication to women's equality, and commitment to including women in all their diversity in the best the province has to offer.

It is my pleasure to work with the Council in the coming year.

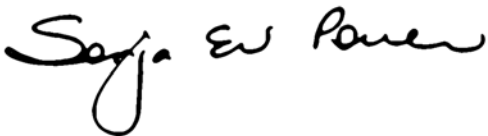


Judy Streatch
Minister responsible for the administration
of the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*

Message from Chair

Having served my first year as Chair of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I am pleased to present the business plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

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.



Sonja Power
Chair

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

1.0 Mission

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

Vision

A province where all women enjoy full equality

- where women of diverse cultures, races, religions and sexual orientation participate in decisions that affect their lives, families and communities ... where women sit in equal numbers on municipal councils and in the legislature
- where legislation, policies and programs of government(s) reflect that equality
- where women's earning power equals that of men ... where women are welcomed in all professions and trades ... where household work and child care is valued by all and shared equally by women and men
- where women do not have to fear violence in their homes, workplaces or communities
- where women's health and well-being is a priority for women, health care services and government

Mandate

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

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

1.1 Planning Context

The Journey Continues: Stepping Stones to Equality

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women remains, as it always has been, an organization that spans boundaries, that builds bridges, between communities, all orders of government, and academic institutions. Those bridges are built for all women, with an ongoing commitment to social inclusion and cultural diversity.

Women in Nova Scotia have made much progress, but also continue to face many challenges:

- Women occupy only seven of 52 seats in the provincial legislature and about 22 percent of municipal council seats; their representation on agencies, boards and commissions continues to be significantly lower than their male counterparts.
- Race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and other grounds of discrimination intersect with gender to multiply disadvantage. For example, Aboriginal women are three times more likely to have experienced spousal violence than non-aboriginal women. Women with disabilities continue to face multiple barriers in obtaining employment. In 2001, less than 40 percent of women with disabilities were in the paid labour force compared to more than 70 percent of women without disabilities. Despite the fact that immigrant women, especially those who have immigrated recently, are more likely to have a university education than non-immigrant women in Nova Scotia, they continue to experience a much higher unemployment rate than non-immigrant women. The unemployment rates of women of African descent are slightly higher than those of non-racially visible women.
- Women in Nova Scotia continue to face economic inequality. The gap between male and female earnings continues to be significant, regardless of whether women are employed or self-employed. In 2003, women who worked full time in Nova Scotia earned 69.1 percent of what their male counterparts earned. The rising proportion of precariously-employed workers continues to have a particularly profound effect on women, resulting in almost half not being eligible for employment insurance-based benefits for maternity leave, parental leave and compassionate care leave. Sole-support mothers are in a particularly difficult financial position, with about half living below the low income cut-offs.
- About 61 percent of employed women in Nova Scotia work in the clerical/administrative and sales/service occupations, where they are more likely to face precarious employment in low-wage workplaces. In 2001-2002, women comprised only 10 percent of students enrolled in trades and technical programs in Nova Scotia. In 2002, only 5 percent of active apprentices in Nova Scotia were women.

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- At the end of the life cycle, too many Nova Scotian women find themselves in financial hardship because they were not in a position to accumulate pensionable earnings or savings during their lifetime.
- Violence against girls and women in all its forms is highly prevalent in the province. Between 1991 and 2004, women in Nova Scotia were about 37 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they were to be killed by a stranger. The high incidence of sexual assault in Nova Scotia, combined with low reporting and a discouraging response to sexual offences, leaves women in a position of increased vulnerability.
- As the number of older seniors increases, women face a heightened demand for unpaid assistance and caregiving. Research indicates that this development entails increased stress for women who are in paid work, particularly when they also have children to care for. The emerging situation will increase pressure not only on women and their families, but also on employers and government.

A brief summary of Council activities in relation to each of the above issue and goal areas follows, to lay the groundwork for this year's business plan.

Activities to promote participation and inclusion of women were:

- Women's Political Campaign School
- Joint work with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities to result in more women in municipal politics
- A Federal-Provincial-Territorial Policy Forum on Aboriginal Women and Violence
- Round Tables for Immigrant Women
- *Guide for Girls*, a publication which covers career and personal life concerns for high school age girls

Examples of work to promote women's economic equality included:

- Women, Work and Care: Policy at the Crossroads, a policy forum to discuss issues and action opportunities to harmonize work and family responsibilities
- Techsploration, a program designed to introduce Grade 9 girls to trades and technology occupations
- Women Unlimited, to pilot programs for women in trades and technology
- A brief to the federal government's labour code review on matters of concern to women

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Our anti-violence agenda included:

- Publication of new sexual assault statistics for Nova Scotia, illustrating the high rate of sexual assault experienced, and the low rate reported
- Participation in the Silent Witness Program, to raise community awareness about women abuse
- Contribution of gender perspectives to the Elder Abuse Strategy
- Participation in four inter-agencies against family violence across the province
- National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women memorial event
- Continued distribution of *Making Changes: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships*

Promoting health and well-being among women and their families was addressed as follows:

- Gender-based analysis of HIV/AIDS strategies in Nova Scotia continued
- A major research program on paid work and unpaid caregiving resulted in a number of publications, leading to a planned forum in spring 2006
- Well Women's Clinics are organized in two rural communities
- National and international relationships further inform the Council's strategies for positive health and well-being of women

Two major challenges continue to confront the Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

- to maintain a coherent approach to the multiplicity of issues referred to us by government and community; and
- to improve our visibility in all parts of Nova Scotia

Advisory Council publications and information resources are a valued contribution to both government and community users. Our website allows us to reach out and link to many policy and community audiences. Media coverage of council events and views was positive throughout the year. Council members are encouraged and supported in being active in their communities.

The Council's approach will be to maintain and build capacity with our many partners. The keystone is our people-dedicated Council members, high-performance staff and trusted partners in community and government. These relationships make it possible to advance equality, fairness and dignity for all women.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

2.0 Strategic Goals

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

Inclusion and Participation

- 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.

The goal of inclusion addresses government priorities in areas of cultural diversity and the social inclusion of all Nova Scotians. It is the policy of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women that this goal will be an overarching one for all the Council's work. No projects or initiatives will be undertaken without a consideration of the ways in which social inclusion and cultural diversity are addressed.

Economic Equality

- To promote women's economic equality.

Women's participation in the full range of education, training and occupational opportunities is an integral part of building a learning culture, greater prosperity, and supporting families and Nova Scotians in need within a context of fiscal responsibility and accountability. Council will follow up on the recommendations arising from the Women, Work and Care: Policy at the Crossroads forum and continue its efforts to increase employment opportunities for women in trade and technical-related occupations.

Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence

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

The reduction of violence in all its forms continues to be a major challenge for Council. The Council's information and education activities related to violence against women support this priority through primary prevention and assisting women affected by violence in all its forms in getting the help they need. Council will collaborate with F/P/T national forum delegates to discuss and address the impact of policy as it relates to Aboriginal women and family violence. Council will also partner with community organizations working in the area of sexual assault to conduct a provincewide needs assessment on sexual assault programs and services.

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Health and Well-Being

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

Council continues to partner with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health in the Canadian Institutes for Health Research-funded Healthy Balance Research Program. The Healthy Balance Research Program continues to generate new research on women's paid and unpaid caregiving in Nova Scotia and its health impact on women. Opportunities for effective policy and program interventions to assist caregivers will be identified and communicated to relevant target audiences. A unique component of the Healthy Balance Program are the four Equity Reference Groups (African-Nova Scotian women, Mi'kmaq women, immigrant women and women with disabilities) whose members contributed significantly to all phases of the research process and will continue to have an active role with the interpretation and dissemination of research outcomes to both policy and community audiences.

3.0 Core Business Areas

1. Policy and 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 and 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 and Rural Outreach

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

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4.0 *Priorities 2006-2007*

Social Inclusion

- To advise government and other stakeholders on best practices, policies, and strategies for the inclusion of women in all their diversity in the development of legislation, policy and programs.
- To increase the numbers and diversity of women in public and political life.
- To maintain the effectiveness of the Advisory Council by increasing the visibility of Council and its members.

Economic Equality/Security

- To make recommendations to policy and community audiences to reduce women's precarious employment and poverty and to increase opportunities for affordable housing.
- To continue to increase women's exposure to and participation in occupations where they remain under-represented, particularly in trades and technology.

Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence

- To identify and recommend measures to prevent and reduce all forms of violence against women, with particular attention to First Nations women, African Nova Scotian women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, and Acadian women.
- To take part in prevention and service development activities related to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Health and Well-Being

- To improve women's access to health services and information by advising government and District Health Authorities about women's health issues.
- To make evidence-based recommendations to provincial and federal governments, and to professional and community audiences about the support needs of women in caregiving and care-receiving roles.

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5.0 Human Resource Strategy

Council takes proactive steps to ensure that new employees and newly-appointed Council members are representative of diverse communities. In the past, Council has done targeted recruitment for Council members within the Acadian and Mi'kmaq communities. Whenever possible, Council consults with the Public Service Commission's diversity pool when recruiting staff, when filling temporary and casual positions, but particularly when filling permanent positions. Given staff size (8 FTEs), orientation is done on an individual basis, taking into account the informational and developmental needs of each staff member.

6.0 Budget Context

	2005-2006 Estimate (\$ thousands)	2005-2006 Forecast (\$ thousands)	2006-2007 Estimate (\$ thousands)
Gross Expenses	843	843	878
Net Expenses	834	834	868
Salaries and Employee Benefits	508	508	526
Funded Staff (FTEs)	8.0	8.1	8.0

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7.0 *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 CSU. This enables the Advisory Council to function with minimal expenditure for administrative overhead.

A communications advisor will continue to be assigned to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, enabling effective communications support to the Minister, Council Chair, members and staff, and systematic communications planning and implementation for all Council initiatives.

2006 / 2007 Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making

OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	MEASURE	DATA Base Year (2001) and subsequent years	TARGET Year	Strategic Actions to Achieve Target
The work of the Advisory Council addresses diversity and social inclusion	Proportion of Council's briefs, statistical publications, informational reports, etc., that address diversity and social inclusion	Year 01-02: 86% Year 02-03: 78% Year 03-04: 78% Year 04-05: 89% Year 05-06: 75%	2007: 90%* * this is a new (higher) target for 2007	Review holdings of Advisory Council publications and recommendations database to establish baseline data. Consistently review Council products as they are developed for diversity/social inclusion content.
Increased public awareness of Council initiatives	Tracking of Council website visits	Year 01-02: 49,244 Year 02-03: 68,260 Year 03-04: 88,689 Year 04-05: 118,900 Year 05-06: 111,947	2007: 100,000	Maintain and enhance Council website, responding to identified information needs.
	Tracking number of speaking engagements of both Council members and staff, as well as audience size and location	Year 05-06: 17	2006-07: 20	This is a new measure to better track the public's awareness of the Council. A speaking engagements tracking form will be developed for Council members and staff to use. Support will be provided to Council members and staff in relation to speaking engagements. Mapping of Council's speaking engagements will be used to ensure a provincewide awareness is achieved.
	Tracking of media stories related to the work of the Advisory Council	Year 01-02: 45 Year 02-03: 46 Year 03-04: 33 Year 04-05: 58 Year 05-06: 89 (print media only)	2007: 75* * this is a new (higher) target for 2007	Ensure public's awareness of Council events, accomplishments and positions through effective communications planning and actions.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making...continued

<i>OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_</i>	<i>TARGET Year</i>	<i>Strategic Actions to Achieve Target</i>
Increased number of Newsbytes subscribers	Track number of Newsbytes subscribers	January 05: 363 subscribers March 06: 513	2007-08: 750* subscribers * this is a new target for 2007,	Newsbytes is the Advisory Council's bi-weekly electronic news bulletin which has been in existence since April 2002. Newsbytes replaced the Council's hard-copy newsletter and informs subscribers of Council news, updates, and short features on women's issues. Through website redesign and consistent marketing, the Advisory Council plans to increase its Newsbytes subscribers to 750 by 2007-08. The target of 750 is a revised one and is based on the current number of subscribers. During the 05-06 fiscal year, because of a technological problem with the gov't software which tracks subscribers, more than 300 subscriber addresses were lost. While most of these have successfully re-subscribed, this set-back has necessitated a revision of our initial target.
Sustained effectiveness of Advisory Council	Council member quarterly self-ratings (1 to 10)	Year 01-02: 8.2 Year 02-03: 7.9 Year 03-04: 7.3 Year 04-05: 7.8 Year 05-06: 8.0* * First three quarters only	Year 05-06: 8.0+	Conduct two-day orientation for new Council members, including media training and public speaking.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Social Inclusion and Participation of Women in Decision-Making...continued

<i>OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_</i>	<i>TARGET Year</i>	<i>Strategic Actions to Achieve Target</i>
Increased numbers of Nova Scotian women obtain the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in public and political life	Number of Women's Campaign School graduates or political skill-building workshop participants	2004-05: 30 (25 from NS, 5 from out of province) 2005-06: 28	45 graduates every four-year cycle 20 participants per skill-building workshop	<p>In 2004, the Advisory Council on the Status of Women developed and coordinated the first-ever Nova Scotia Campaign School for Women. The School, held in Halifax in November 2004, had a total of 30 graduates who gained invaluable knowledge and skills required to participate actively in public and political life.</p> <p>In 2006-07, the Advisory Council will offer a series of workshops to women in three different regions of the province. The workshops will aim to enhance specific campaigning skills. There will not be a Campaign School in this fiscal year.</p>

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Economic Equality and Security of Women

<i>OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_</i>	<i>TARGET Year</i>	<i>Strategic Actions to Achieve Target</i>
<p>The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well utilized by government and community partners in social and economic initiatives., eg. Women in Trades and Technology Initiative, Hypatia, Immigration Strategy, Social Policy, Community Development Initiative.</p>	<p>Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.</p>	<p>This is a new measure for 05-06, baseline data not yet available</p>	<p>2005-06: 3.5 out of 5</p>	<p>Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) through training and use of guided case studies.</p> <p>Enhance the Advisory Council's Resource Centre holdings in relation to GBA, establishing a GBA Resource Centre for use by government policy and research staff.</p> <p>Advise on GBA activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government.</p> <p>Develop feedback form (five-point rating scale) to assess satisfaction of government departments and community groups with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.</p>

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Personal Safety and Freedom from Violence for Women

<i>OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_</i>	<i>TARGET Year</i>	<i>Strategic Actions to Achieve Target</i>
Strong utilization of policy-based research and informational resources developed and disseminated by the Advisory Council pertaining to personal safety and violence against women	Track utilization of <i>Making Changes</i> and other relevant resources	2001-02: 13,300 2002-03: 11,430 2003-04: 40,337 2004-05: 38,434 2005-06: 20,940 copies of <i>Making Changes</i> were either requested (hard copy) or downloaded from Council's website.	25,000+* * this is a new target based on data from past several years.	Reprint <i>Making Changes</i> as required Creation and maintenance of web-based resource on Nova Scotian sexual assault statistics. Update of <i>Family Violence and Personal Safety</i> in possible collaboration with NS Dept of Justice.

Performance Measures: NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Strategic Goal: Health and Well-Being of Women

<i>OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)</i>	<i>MEASURE</i>	<i>DATA Include Base Year (2001) and subsequent year_</i>	<i>TARGET Year</i>	<i>Strategic Actions to Achieve Target</i>
<p>The advice, recommendations, and input that the Advisory Council makes in relation to gender, inclusion and diversity are valued and well-utilized by government and community partners in health and wellness initiatives., eg. Health Promotion Strategy, Healthy Balance Research Program, HIV/AIDS Strategy.</p>	<p>Government departments and community groups express satisfaction with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.</p>	<p>This is a new measure for 05-06, baseline data not yet available</p>	<p>2005-06: 3.5 out of 5</p>	<p>Enhance Advisory Council's capacity to conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) through training and use of guided case-studies.</p> <p>Enhance the Advisory Council's Resource Centre holdings in relation to GBA, establishing a GBA Resource Centre for use by government policy and research staff.</p> <p>Advise on GBA activities in and outside government in order to promote a diversity-inclusive gender perspective throughout the work of government.</p> <p>Develop feedback form (five-point rating scale) to assess satisfaction of government departments and community groups with Advisory Council's recommendations and inputs.</p>