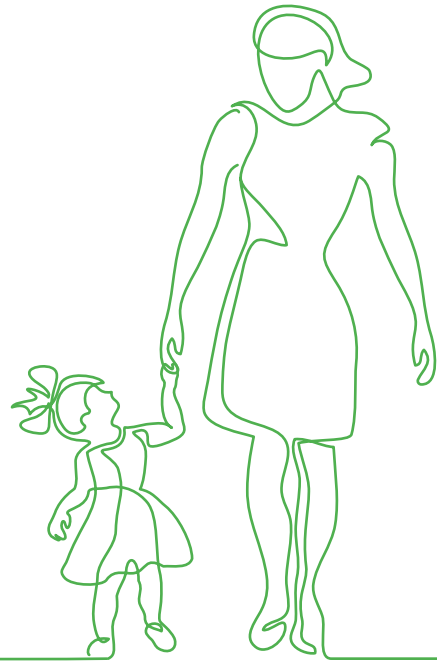


Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls.



Progress Report – October 2018

Message from the Co-Chairs

We are pleased to present the first update of the Minister's Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls. Members of the Steering Committee represent a selection of key stakeholders who have experience and knowledge of issues related to violence against women and girls. Current membership includes persons with lived experience and representatives of the Women's Policy Office, RNC, RCMP, Public Prosecutions, Violence Prevention Avalon East, Stella's Circle, NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, Public Legal Information Association of NL and the St. John's Native Friendship Centre.

This update provides information on our collective work to prevent and address violence against women and girls and outlines initiatives that have been undertaken since the inaugural meeting of the full Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls held on December 8, 2017.

Please feel free to reach out to the Steering Committee by emailing vawg@gov.nl.ca to share ideas or information on other ongoing initiatives in the community.

We welcome your feedback on this important work.

Regards,

Hon. Andrew Parsons, QC, Minister of Justice and Public Safety and Attorney General

Linda Ross, President and CEO, Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Guiding Principles

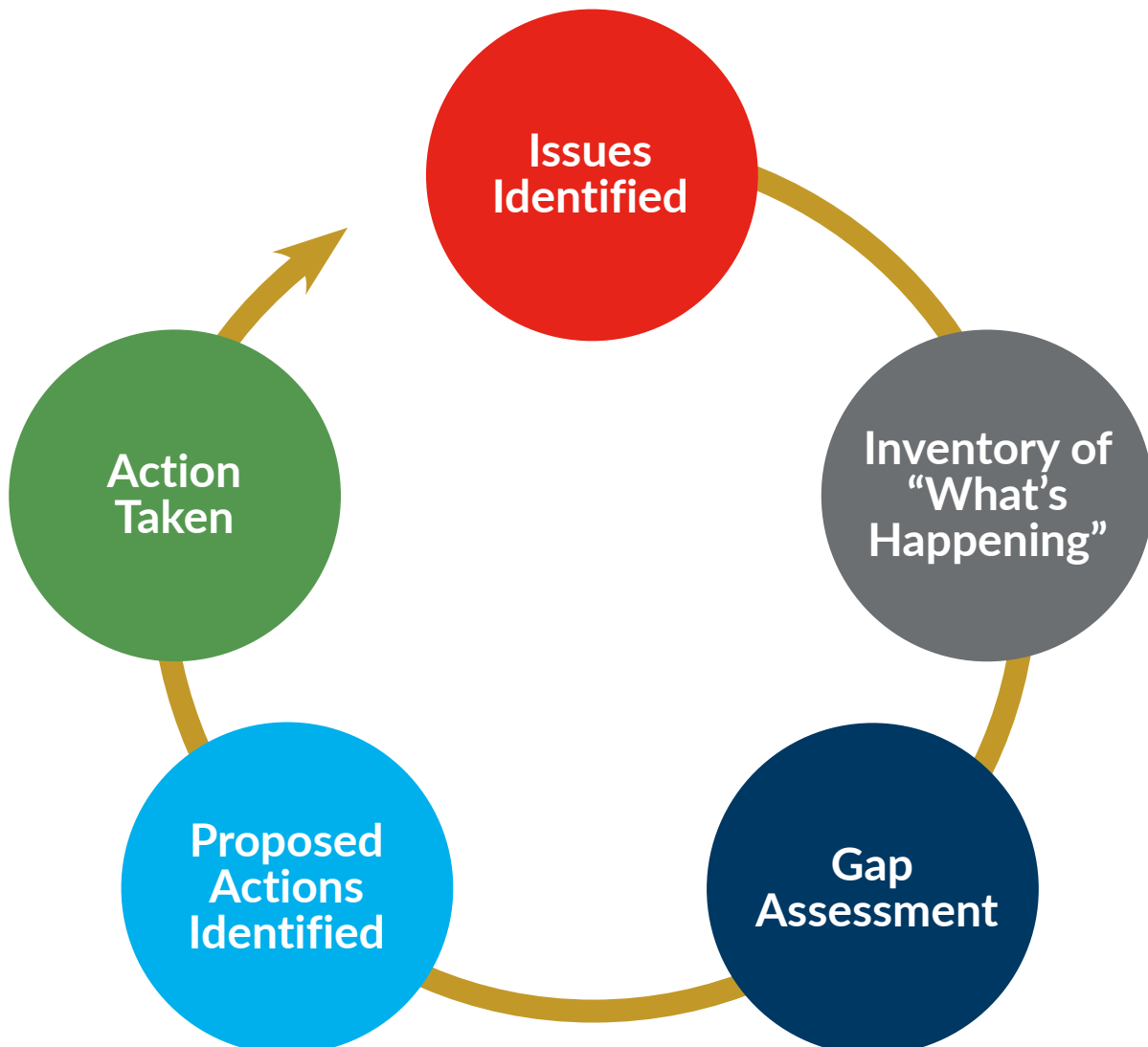
The following principles have been established to guide the work of the Steering Committee:

- Ensuring survivor safety and consent is paramount;
- The interest and voice of survivors is taken into account through a trauma-informed perspective;
- In the context that offenders have a right to fair trial and due process, a balance is needed to hold offenders accountable while developing meaningful interventions to prevent recidivism and reduce violence; and

- Given the differing circumstances of survivors of violence, multiple options and pathways should be explored wherever possible, to be as responsive to survivors as possible.

Meetings and Outcomes

Organization and Direction – The Steering Committee has met five times; April, May, June, August and September 2018. The Steering Committee has established a model for how challenges and issues would be addressed, as outlined below:



Ongoing Initiatives and Updates

- At the Steering Committee's first meeting, one of the first tasks was to review the recommendations arising from the December 8, 2017 meeting of the full Committee. This identified a priority focus on a number of issues, including examining the application of Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs), alternative means to encourage higher rates of reporting sexual and intimate partner violence (such as third party or anonymous reporting), and enhanced mechanisms to monitor and deter perpetrators of intimate partner violence, among other topics.
- **Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Unit:**
 - The RNC has a unit specifically dealing with intimate partner violence that falls under the Major Crime Unit of the Criminal Investigation Division. The unit consists of two dedicated police officers and a crime analyst. Its mandate is to provide an enhanced coordinated and consistent response to intimate partner violence related matters as well as work toward the prevention of this kind of violence. The IPV Unit encompasses the Northeast Avalon, Corner Brook and Labrador City. The RNC's IPV initiatives include:
 - Cellphone program: The IPV Unit provides cell phones to survivors of intimate partner violence that have had their phone broken or stolen or who just do not have them. This provides a means of contacting police should there be an emergency.
 - A pet safe-keeping program is running on the Northeast Avalon and Corner Brook and is in developmental stages in Labrador. The program provides emergency foster care to pets of survivors of intimate partner violence should they have to flee a violent situation.
 - Education: The IPV Unit continues to offer training to police officers as well as community stakeholders and partners.
 - Community Service Program: STRIVE (Students Taking Responsibility in Violence Education Program). The goal of the program is to empower students to take ownership of the problem of youth violence.
 - The RCMP has a dedicated IPV Unit, which provides guidance and oversight on intimate partner violence investigations, as well as support to front line police officers conducting such investigations. This unit gathers and analyzes relevant data from RCMP calls for service and crime prevention/community policing initiatives which is used to identify emerging crime trends, identify repeat offenders in the area of relationship violence, and to ensure policing measures are evolving to address all aspects of this type of crime. The unit continues to work with high risk Indigenous communities and key stakeholders in the implementation of both educational and crime reduction strategies around relationships and family violence.
- **Mobile Crisis Response Teams** have been established on the Northeast Avalon and in Labrador West. These teams consist of a health care crisis intervener and a plain-clothed RNC officer working together to respond to people in the community experiencing mental health crises. The feasibility of expanding this service to other regions of the province will be assessed in 2018-19.

- **Federal Bill S-249, An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic Violence**, which was introduced in the federal Senate by Senator Fabian Manning. Senator Manning is holding roundtable discussions in the province; a session has been completed on the West Coast and another has been planned for the Avalon region.
- **Violence Prevention Initiative** – Over the past number of years, the Women’s Policy Office has worked with its partners both internal and external to government to implement the action items outlined in the current Violence Prevention Initiative Action Plan, Working Together for Violence-Free Communities. Through that plan, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed \$9.5 million over four years to implement 67 strategic actions to raise awareness about violence and its devastating impacts, expand engagement to involve more people in the prevention of violence and strengthen policies, programs and services related to violence prevention. The Women’s Policy Office is now in the process of planning engagement which will inform the future of violence prevention in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- To complement the ongoing work of the Minister’s Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls, **the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women struck a committee of ministers** representing multiple departments that oversees collective actions to address issues of violence in our province. In addition to the Women’s Policy Office, the committee includes ministers responsible for Justice and Public Safety, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Community Services, Children, Seniors and Social Development, Service NL,

and Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. Through these efforts, we are ensuring that the voices of those experiencing violence or harassment are heard when updating programs and policies throughout government.

- **Amendments to the Family Violence Protection Act, including:**
 - Expanding the definition of violence to include where someone uses words or actions to control, intimidate, isolate and dehumanize, or use finances to directly abuse an individual (Bill 1 received Royal Assent and came into force March 2018).
 - Streamlining and simplifying the process of issuing EPOs that can provide immediate help.
- **Third Party (Anonymous) Reporting** – The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women has taken the lead on exploring the potential of implementing Third Party Reporting, or Anonymous Reporting, in the province, and has convened a working group which includes the RNC, Public Prosecutions, PLIAN, the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners program, the NL Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre, and the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. This working group was established to discuss this issue in further depth and work on establishing a pilot project in St. John’s. Third Party Reporting allows for a statement to be taken about an incident of sexual assault by a third party organization or agency, which then submits the report to the police with any identifying information about the complainant removed.

- **Sexual Violence Legal Support Service –**
The Sexual Violence Legal Support Service launched on June 19, 2018. This service is a component of the Journey Project, an ongoing partnership between the Public Legal Information Association of NL (PLIAN) and the NLSACPC. This service provides legal support and navigation to people who have experienced any form of sexual violence in the province, and offers up to four hours of free legal advice from participating lawyers as well as general legal information and support and referrals to other resources from trained trauma-informed Legal Support Navigators working with PLIAN and the NLSACPC.
- **Sexual Exploitation:**
 - Naomi Centre at Stella’s Circle works with young women to prevent sexual exploitation and has reached out to schools as part of promoting this program. Naomi Centre is an emergency shelter that offers safe and supportive temporary housing for women aged 16-30 within a harm reduction model. The facility also includes two apartments. In addition to providing support to women living at the shelter, support is also offered to former residents of Naomi Centre. One of the programs offered at Naomi Centre includes My Life, My Choice, a sexual exploitation prevention program targeting high school students.
 - The Blue Door is a new St. John’s based program that is operated through Thrive. This program is the first of its kind in the province and is designed to support individuals, primarily between the ages of 14-29, to exit sex trade activities and/or sexually exploitive situations including sex trafficking. The program is inclusive of gender and sexual orientation. The Blue Door offers intensive, individualized services

and supports that addresses key barriers to the exiting process and helps participants move forward with dignity, self-determination and respect.

- Thrive’s Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth (CASEY) is a group of concerned professionals and experiential voices in the community that work together to address issues pertaining to the sexual exploitation of youth. CASEY works to create awareness and understanding of sexual exploitation of youth within the general public, youth and organizations that work with youth; increase opportunities to network, collaborate, and share information; and advocates for appropriate supports and resources to reduce or prevent the sexual exploitation of youth.
- **Correctional Facilities:**
 - Stella’s Circle’s program Just Us Women’s Centre works with incarcerated women in facilities and in the community and has recently begun to focus on women who have lost or have been separated from their children.
 - The St. John’s Women’s Centre and NLSACPC have a joint partnership for a Pre-Release Program at the Newfoundland and Labrador Correctional Centre for Women. Every five weeks, a staff member visits the facility in Clarenville as part of their pre-release process to talk about available programs in the community.
- **Restorative Justice –** The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women held a seminar on Implementing Restorative Justice in the NL Criminal Justice System on May 31, 2018. The goal of this event was to expand awareness around the benefits of restorative justice among

educators, those working in the criminal justice system, the general public and examine next steps for implementation. In late June, representatives from Justice and Public Safety, Provincial Court, RNC, RCMP and a representative from the Miawpukek First Nation were in Halifax participating in the Collaborative Learning Conference on the Acceleration of the Use of Restorative Justice in the Criminal Justice System, which we hope will provide us with a framework to move forward with Restorative Justice initiatives in Newfoundland and Labrador.

- **Work with Men** – The St. John’s Native Friendship Centre is looking at initiatives to teach boys to respect and be accountable in their actions towards women. Violence Prevention Avalon East is excited and very grateful to be the selected organization for the provincial project Deconstructing Masculinity - Engaging Men in Violence Prevention. As set out in their 2018 Proposal to the NL Beard and Moustache Club (aka “The Merb’ys”) which raises money each year through a charity calendar, the objective of this provincial project, that all 10 Violence Prevention offices will be implementing, is to “undertake education, public awareness-raising, outreach, and community-capacity building activities to challenge negative attitudes of masculinity and consequently empower men to become meaningfully engaged in violence prevention.”

Next Steps

The Steering Committee has identified the following next steps:

1. **Communication** – the Steering Committee will continue to explore avenues to ensure that initiatives like those listed above are communicated to interested stakeholders, and that collaboration and partnership continues with the Minister’s Committee on Violence Against Women and Girls.
2. **Identifying Gaps** – the Steering Committee will continue to work on identifying gaps which will be used to guide future work.
3. **The Second Forum** – The Steering Committee will plan another forum in December on violence against women and girls, focusing on key initiatives and action that can be taken moving forward to implement these initiatives.

To share ideas or information on other ongoing initiatives in the community, contact the committee by emailing vawg@gov.nl.ca.

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