

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS: 2009 EQUALITY REPORT CARD A REVIEW FOR 2009 BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

The members of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women initiated the Equality Report Card for PEI in 2007 to assess the PEI government's progress towards women's equality goals. The Report Card is also a tool for increasing communication, collaboration, and understanding between the Advisory Council and government about government's obligations to women and women's equality. We thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today in the lead-up to the 2009 Provincial Budget. We will be reviewing this year's budget and budget address with great interest.

When the Advisory Council set priority recommendations for assessment, Council did not want the Report Card to be all about money. Council members worked hard to ensure that many recommendations could be accomplished without significant new investment. They put strong emphasis on recommendations that address changes in legislation or that require more emphasis on women's equality in public statements and in departments' planning. In addition to asking about bottom lines, the Report Card asks departments to talk about processes: meetings and consultations founded on good principles and process, and steps, no matter how small, towards implementing complex recommendations.

Again this year, government can achieve good grades on many of the Advisory Council's recommendations based on good legislation, policy development, consultations, and processes that are based on gender- and diversity-based analysis. Many of the goals we discuss can be reached simply by taking women and the reality of women's lives into consideration in public policy, and by setting priorities that will lead to more equitable outcomes for women and men citizens of Prince Edward Island, with special consideration for diversity groups that may face particular vulnerabilities.

That being said, many barriers to women's equality have an economic element. Some of the barriers to equality we identify can only be overcome with new or additional resources. Many of the recommendations we make could be implemented more quickly or easily with more funding. Budget increases are also easy to identify, to measure, and to reward. It is for this reason we are pleased to have a chance to make you aware of our 2009 Priority Recommendations for the Equality Report Card during your consultations on the 2009 Budget.

It is not the purpose of the Equality Report Card to advocate for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women's budget. However, our vision for a Prince Edward Island with greater gender equality requires continued commitment to the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and its granting programs to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women and to equality-seeking organizations in the community.

When governments take systematic account of potentially different outcomes of budget decisions on women and on men, this is referred to as "gender budgetting." In addition to reviewing Report Card recommendations with you today, our second goal today is to introduce the idea of gender budgets and to open a dialogue about how gender budgetting could be applied in Prince Edward Island for the benefit of citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about the Equality Report Card and gender budgetting.

MAKING EQUALITY A PRIORITY: *To make women's equality a priority, we expect the provincial government to meet its commitments to analyse the effects on everyday Island women of existing and proposed legislation, policy, and budgeting. This means applying gender- and diversity-based analysis and collecting and using up-to-date sex-disaggregated data.*

MAKING EQUALITY A PRIORITY	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Commitment to applying gender- and diversity-based analysis (GBA) throughout government	<i>Minimal:</i> Current action on the motion to examine best practices for GBA and to look into training opportunities for public servants should not incur costs; in the case that future training costs require a budget, see Interministerial Women's Secretariat budget requests. Otherwise, cross-government costs should be minimal: refocusing on GBA should be a matter of internal priority-setting.
Steps to ensure that all women benefit equally from government's proposed economic development plans (for example, the "prosperity agenda" and redefined "rural development")	<i>Potential:</i> Gender budgeting to assess the impacts on women and men of economic development may require some additional resources to consult with citizens, collect evidence, and develop expertise. Also, investing in social infrastructure alongside physical infrastructure is essential to supporting women's equality and would likely require significant new vision in priorities and investments.
Update of 1996 statistical profile of women on PEI	<i>Potential:</i> See Interministerial Women's Secretariat budget request for any allocations required.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING: *To increase women’s participation in the highest levels of decision-making, we expect the provincial government to actively encourage women’s advancement and break down barriers to women’s leadership.*

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Increased equality in appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions	<i>Minimal:</i> Should require no change in bottom-line spending for agencies, boards, and commissions or for the Participate in PEI process that oversees appointments, unless the Participate in PEI office were to request special funds for recruiting women and diversity groups.
Gender focus and gender-based strategies applied in the Special Committee on the Role of the MLA, to examine and reduce barriers to women in elected office	<i>Minimal:</i> This committee was announced in the 2008 Speech from the Throne. Any budget allocated to the Committee when it is established should be sufficient to allow expert input on gender issues, from the Advisory Council, from inside government (for instance, the Interministerial Women’s Secretariat), or from outside government (community-based organizations).
Increased employment equity, especially women in leadership roles, within the provincial civil service	<i>Minimal:</i> Baseline measurement of current situation for 2009; increased equity over the long term should not necessarily affect bottom-line spending on civil service. However, any budgetary measures affecting the civil service positively or negatively will require careful analysis to determine potential differential impacts on male and female employees.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: *To reduce violence in our province, we expect the provincial government to provide for community-based, women-led, pro-feminist programs and services that prevent violence against women specifically and family violence more generally, and that provide services when violence occurs.*

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Enhanced core funding for Family Violence Prevention Services and the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to support them to flourish as community organizations	<i>Funding required:</i> Budget implications primarily for Social Services and Seniors.
Increased application of existing Woman Abuse Protocols, with more protocols developed as needed	<i>Minimal:</i> No new costs unless for new protocols being developed or for training costs to ensure ongoing application of protocols. A new protocol for child protection was recommended by the Advisory Council during the Child Protection Act review of 2008.
Targetted programs for preventing violence against women of various ages (youth, seniors) and/or various vulnerable groups (Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, new immigrant women)	<i>Potential:</i> There could be budget implications for various departments who could potentially fund these programs: Interministerial Women’s Secretariat; Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour (esp. for Aboriginal women); Office of the Attorney General; Social Services and Seniors. In many cases supports already exist and would not be new inputs.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS: *We expect the provincial government to set a priority on improving the health, dignity, and well-being of Islanders who struggle with a less than livable income. We urge the government to consult and collaborate with community-based organizations to develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy like those in other provinces. We see the three priority areas below as key elements of Poverty Reduction:*

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Investment in affordable, accessible, appropriate housing, including housing designed to meet the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities	<i>Funding required:</i> Budget implications primarily for Social Services and Seniors. Funding for social housing has been designated in the federal budget; we will be looking to see how the Province takes this up.
Increased allotment of funds for direct payment to social services recipients to bring them up to a standard of living in which all basic needs are met	<i>Funding required:</i> Budget implications primarily for Social Services and Seniors.
Improvements to the Employment Standards Act that improve working conditions and wages for non-unionized workers	<i>Minimal:</i> Legislative changes apply to employers; as an employer, the Province exceeds minimum standards.

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING: *Early childhood care and education has been a particular policy focus recently, and this has implications for caregivers. From childcare, to supports for caregivers of people with disabilities, to home care for ailing adults and seniors, we expect government to recognize unpaid or underpaid labour provided by caregivers, most frequently women. Government must not enact policies that increase the burden on caregivers, without increasing supports.*

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
<p>Additional investment in early childhood care and education that increases quality, accessibility, affordability, and focus on child development (for instance, enhanced support to meet needs for infant spaces, programs in rural areas, programming for special needs children, and culturally supportive programs)</p>	<p><i>Funding required:</i> Budget implications primarily for Education and Early Childhood Education, with potential implications for Social Services and Seniors to support special needs and vulnerable groups or for Communities, Cultural Affairs and Labour to support cultural communities.</p>
<p>Consultation and planning with early-childhood educators for changes in early childhood care and education</p>	<p><i>Potential:</i> Budget planning will need to project for implementing recommendations from the Public Kindergarten Commissioner on an immediate basis if kindergarten is to be integrated into the public school system by the fall of 2010.</p>
<p>Measures to address the needs of seniors for elder care, home care, and other non-professional services in their homes and communities outside institutions and/or to assist and support family members who care for older adults</p>	<p><i>Funding required:</i> Budget implications primarily for Social Services and Seniors.</p>

WOMEN'S HEALTH: *We expect government to sustain a strong system for acute care, but to relieve future burdens on the acute care system by continuing to take steps that recognize whole-body holistic health and that address social determinants of health such as gender, income, language, and culture. We encourage government to demonstrate a commitment to wellness and prevention in health.*

WOMEN'S HEALTH	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Enhanced initiatives to provide appropriate, gender-specific mental health programming	<i>Potential:</i> Possible budget implications for Health to make enhancements.
Enhanced services for women with addictions (improved access to group programs, individual counselling, drop-in counselling, and child care; women-only therapy groups that address self-esteem, abuse, and recovery)	<i>Potential:</i> Possible budget implications for Health and/or for Social Services and Seniors to make enhancements.
Increased integration of nurse practitioners into the health-care system, including instituting a Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner (SANE) program like that in other provinces	<i>Potential:</i> Integration of nurse practitioners should be part of overall planning for the Health system; if it isn't, then recruitment and retention may require additional inputs.
Steps towards increased birthing options for Island women, towards an eventual birthing centre	<i>Potential:</i> Initial steps towards improved birthing options should not require new investment, though funding would obviously make those steps bigger and faster.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: *Access to family law legal aid continues to be a challenge for Island women. Most calls to the PEI Status of Women office continue to be from women who need a lawyer's advice. In many cases, they cannot afford a lawyer. We expect government to continue to place high priority on ensuring women and families have access to justice.*

ACCESS TO JUSTICE	2009 BUDGET IMPLICATIONS
Improved access to family law legal aid lawyers	<i>Potential:</i> There was significant new investment in support of this recommendation in the 2008 budget; if these new resources are being used that result in improved access, new money is not urgent.
Actions to implement the recommendations of the Justice Options for Women project	<i>Potential:</i> Some recommendations would require support through the Attorney General's Office, Social Services and Seniors, Health, and/or the Interministerial Women's Secretariat.
Steps towards a domestic violence court option	<i>Potential:</i> Small steps will likely not require new funding; larger steps clearly will require support through the Attorney General's Office, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, and perhaps Social Services and Seniors.