



PEI Equality Report Card
INTERIM TRENDS REPORT

June 2009 to June 2010

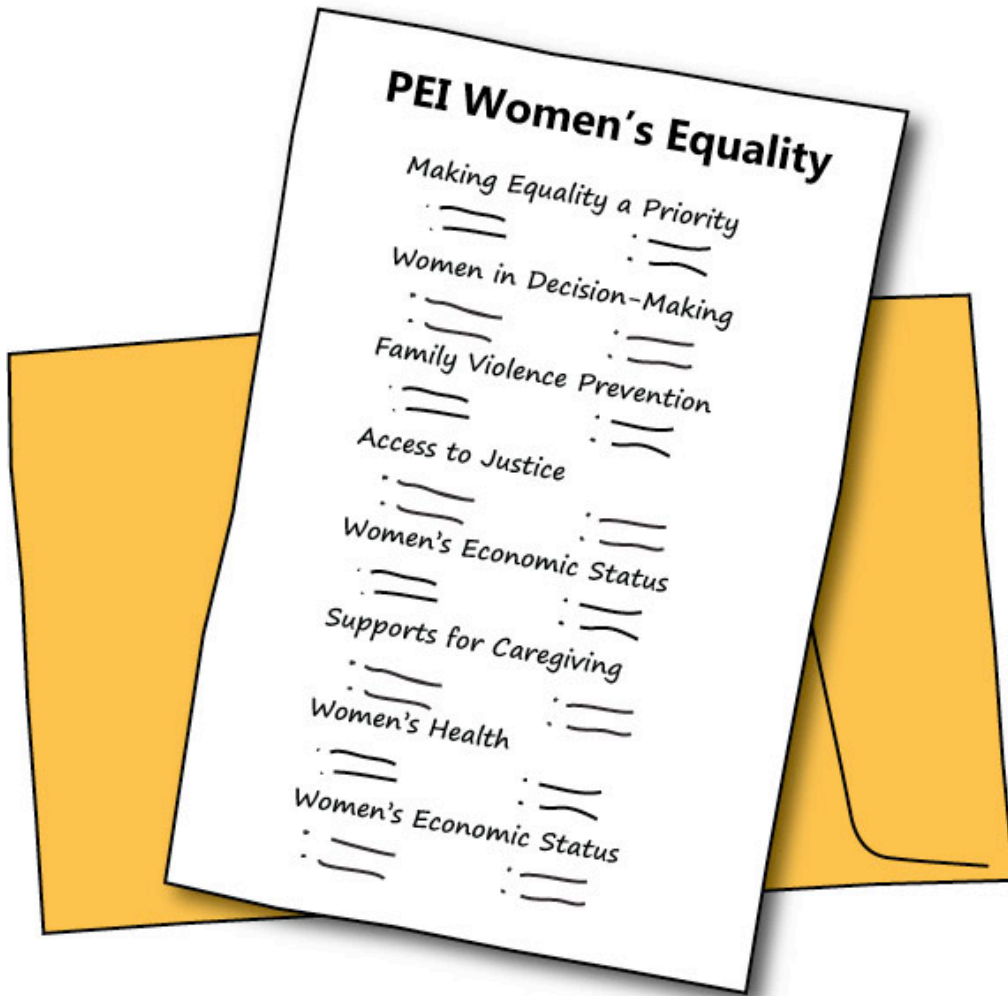


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In June 2009, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women released its second **Equality Report Card** to assess government's progress towards women's equality goals.

In June 2011, the Council will release another full Equality Report Card, based on the same criteria and priorities.

This report is an **interim trends report** featuring highlights of action and inaction towards women's equality goals. Information in this report is from the public record: news releases, publications, media reports, and editorial content.

Members of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women offered government departments and selected community organizations an opportunity to review and respond to a draft of this document.

Information is updated to June 1, 2010.

OVERALL FINDINGS

The Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women's findings from June 2009 to June 2010 point to a **higher overall Equality Report Card grade** for government in 2011, as long as actions continue to support women's equality goals.

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND  **Towards a better grade in 2011.**

Government's overall grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C.

MAKING EQUALITY A PRIORITY

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND

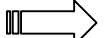


Towards a better grade in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C+.

Main category goal	Analysis
To make women's equality a priority, we expect the provincial government to meet its commitments to analyze 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.	<p>Despite positive trends, our Council cautions that much remains to be done to consider women's equality in economic development and in other major plans and publications offered by government.</p> <p>It is our belief that more systematic application of gender- and diversity-based analysis will help this situation, so it is encouraging that the training and statistical data necessary for this analysis are being put in place.</p>
Sub-category goals	Analysis
Commitment to applying gender- and diversity-based analysis (GBA) throughout government.	<p>The committee that was struck to review good practices in gender- and diversity-based analysis and to recommend training for members of the civil service has completed its work. This work included reviewing research, assessing models for GBA, consulting the community, and making recommendations. Council looks forward to seeing the effects of the committee's work in GBA training and more systematic application of GBA in government's work. However, government continues to make most decisions without considering gender. For instance, the decision to make our official anthem the "Island Hymn," with its lyrics in the gender-blind language of the last century, ends up being a decision that excludes over 51% of the population.</p>
Steps to ensure that women will benefit equally from government's proposed economic development plans (for example, the "prosperity agenda" and redefined "rural development").	<p>One good-news story: government's pilot initiative is the Trade HERizons Program, managed through Women's Network PEI. The program gives vulnerable women exposure to and training in trades where women are under-represented. Council would like to see this program expanded with wider criteria for admission into the program. We are also pleased that an all-female carpentry course will be piloted this year.</p> <p>Unfortunately, wider provincial plans for economic development, including key documents on rural development published in the last year, show little evidence of gender analysis or gender perspectives.</p>
Update of 1996 statistical profile of women on PEI.	<p>We understand there is a completed draft of an updated statistical profile. This is praise worthy. Council looks forward to the updated publication and its application to policy-making.</p>

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND  **Towards a similar grade in 2011.**

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C.

Main category goal	Analysis
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.	A cabinet shuffle left the low numbers of women in the Executive Council the same but notably resulted in the loss of one experienced female minister. The shuffle also saw a drop in the number of female MLAs serving on government committees, going from 23.5% to 17.7%.

Sub-category goals	Analysis
Increased equality in appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions.	The recent appointment of Anne Nicholson as the first female chairperson of the Human Rights Commission in its history is a highlight. The appointment of only three women to the 11-member Health PEI board is more troubling, especially since women make up 85% of the provincial civil service in health.
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.	The Special Committee on the Role of the MLA has not been established. On a more positive note, the government continues to have good communications with the PEI Coalition for Women in Government about ways to reduce barriers to women in elected office.
Increased employment equity, especially women in leadership roles, within the provincial civil service.	Council applauds government for its Public Internship Program for recent graduates of post-secondary education to find work experience in the civil service or in community organizations. We were pleased to see government put values of diversity and equity in the forefront, encouraging applications from people of Aboriginal ancestry, persons with a disability, members of a visible minority, and women in non-traditional professions.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND



Towards a similar or better grade in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a B-.

Main category goal	Analysis
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.	The renewed mandate of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention is beginning to bear fruit. There was considerable focus on family violence prevention during the recent sitting of the legislature. Still to be seen is more overt action to name and to address violence against women as well as "family violence." Government continues to use a gender-neutral approach to "family violence" prevention, despite evidence that violence is experienced differently by men and women, girls and boys, gays and lesbians, and other groups.
Sub-category goals	Analysis
Enhanced core funding for Family Violence Prevention Services and the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to support them to flourish as community organizations.	Council understands that government has provided critical financial increases to Family Violence Prevention Services' core and one-time grant allocations and a very small increase to the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre funding. This is good news. Council urges government to roll increases into core grant amounts going forward.
Increased application of existing Woman Abuse Protocols, with more protocols developed as needed.	Government remains committed to Woman Abuse Protocols, and this is good news. Council still would like to see more formalized, consistent training in the Protocols. We call again for Protocols for Child Protection and for Disability Supports.
Targeted programs for preventing violence against women of various ages (youth, seniors) and/or various vulnerable groups (Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, new immigrant women).	<p>The Department of Education offered input and support in developing curriculum-linked teachers' resource kits to accompany last year's Purple Ribbon Campaign. This was a highlight, and Council is pleased they are willing to continue to build on this success.</p> <p>Changes to the Child Protection Act that more clearly define who is a "child" under the law are good news for women from 16 to 18 years old who are facing violence in their homes or their relationships. The province also continues to maintain a strong focus on prevention of elder abuse. One example is the PEI World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15) Committee to raise awareness about elder abuse.</p> <p>Nationally, the Ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, including PEI's minister, have been working with national Aboriginal organizations and have committed to working towards ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls as one of three priorities for improving outcomes for Aboriginal, Metis, and Inuit peoples.</p>

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND



Towards similar or improved grade in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C+.

Main category goal	Analysis
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.	The Attorney General's Office has consistently shown excellent application of gender- and diversity-based analysis and has striven to improve women's access to justice in an ongoing, step-by-step way. Hopefully, progress will continue with undiminished resources and political will. The big item that would make a difference in this category would be publicly announced progress towards assessing the feasibility of a domestic violence court option.
Sub-category goals	Analysis
Improved access to family law legal aid lawyers.	The 2010 budget is unclear in its commitment to legal aid, with reduced salaries but increased contracts and no definition of the proportion of the budget dedicated to aid for family versus criminal law. Estimates for family and legal services are significantly less than was actually spent last fiscal year. Council will need more information to assess potential effects and will be following this closely for 2011.
Actions to implement the recommendations of the Justice Options for Women project.	The Justice Options for Women project recommended supports for women who experienced violence. In this spirit, it is good news that the courts are offering increased access to closed-circuit television as a means for victims to provide testimony in safety.
Steps towards a domestic violence court option.	Council looks forward to progress on this file that can be announced in public soon.

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND



Towards a higher grade in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C.

Main category goal	Analysis
<p>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.</p>	<p>Government must be commended for its clear commitment to early childhood care and education and its action to implement the Preschool Excellence Initiative. The major investment in this sector is welcome. Focus on enhanced learning for young children and the commitment to better wage structures for educators and caregivers is good news. Also, the net benefits of integrating kindergarten into the school system will be significant. However, short timelines and forced deadlines for transitions in early childhood care and education have resulted in too much preventable stress for everyone involved, and government should have anticipated the challenges. There are many times government is accused of acting too slowly: why rush the changes in early childhood care and education to the present extent?</p>

Sub-category goals	Analysis
<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>Government has acted on many of Council's recommendations regarding integrating kindergarten into the public school system, and this is welcome news.</p> <p>With its new initiatives for Preschool Excellence and Infant Homes, the government has shown commitment to the importance of care and learning for pre-school children and support for parents who work outside the home. There has also been additional investment in early childhood care and education, including plans that will cap parental contributions and enhance wages for educators. These are all steps in the right direction. Improving the wage structures for early childhood educators places renewed value on caregiving work and jobs that even today are mostly held by women.</p> <p>At this point, many questions remain about how the early childhood sector will manage the substantial transitions it faces. Children, parents, and educators remain in states of insecurity and have little time to plan. Crucial questions remain to be answered about the viability of some (especially rural) childcare centres and about supports for children whose parents are still unable to afford or access childcare services. Council will continue to watch and assess developments carefully as the outcomes of government initiatives become clearer.</p>

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING, continued

Sub-category goals	Analysis
<p>Consultation and planning with early-childhood educators for changes in early childhood care and education.</p>	<p>Council expresses concern for those teachers planning to leave the early childhood sector and to join the public school system: they waited far too long for confirmations of their positions and details about where they would teach. The timelines for changes in their work and education situations have been incredibly tight.</p> <p>Council took advantage of the opportunity to participate in consultations on the early childhood care and education sector and appreciates that the resulting Preschool Excellence Initiative reflects many of the values and ideas Council members presented. However, it is important to state that this consultation came late in the day in a sector that was facing crisis with kindergarten moving into the public school system. While the sector has received historic, unprecedented support and commitment, uncertainty remains. Parents, childcare centre owners, and educators are all uncertain about what will change and what will remain in place in September. Government must acknowledge its role in creating this intensely stressful situation.</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>There are small but positive signs about supports for caregiving for seniors recently, including funding to the Alzheimer Society for respite care, increased subsidies for seniors' prescriptions, and new drugs on the provincial formulary to help more Islanders reach their senior years and enjoy them in good health. Council is interested in more information about a pilot project to allow paramedics to offer homecare supports for rural seniors, an idea that appears innovative but still provokes controversy.</p>

WOMEN'S HEALTH

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND



Towards a lower grade in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a C-.

Main category goal	Analysis
<p>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.</p>	<p>The longer action on these priority issues remains stagnant, the lower grades must sink, as the situations they address become more urgent. Despite the provincial government's focus on health and education as budget and policy priorities, there is little movement on most of the priorities Council would like to see addressed to enhance women's health. New models of care require a high standard of gender- and diversity-based analysis and effective consultation with the communities of interest to ensure the needs of women health-care professionals and women patients all receive the best possible treatment.</p>
Sub-category goals	Analysis
<p>Enhanced initiatives to provide appropriate, gender-specific mental health programming.</p>	<p>Council is not aware of any new public initiatives to support Islanders with mental health challenges. We understand that within the Department of Health and Wellness, a promising new determinants tool is being used to plan programs and initiatives in primary care. We look forward to more details.</p>
<p>Enhanced services for women with addictions.</p>	<p>The youth addictions day facility is now up and running (for ages 13-24), and this promises to contribute greatly to young Islanders' health and well-being as some of them and their families deal with addictions. The program is gender specific as appropriate. Women and girls continue to be identified among the priority groups in the Province's Mental Health Services Strategy.</p>
<p>Increased integration of nurse practitioners into the health-care system, including instituting a Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner (SANE) program like that in other provinces.</p>	<p>It is Council's understanding that government intends to establish a SANE program and that space has been set aside at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This is great news. We look forward to seeing a budget committed.</p> <p>The news for nurse practitioners and nurses is more difficult to read. Nurse practitioners are rarely mentioned in public discussions of changes to the models of care. As the roles of nurse practitioners, nurses, and nursing assistants change, and as new models of care are implemented, Council calls on government to maintain the highest standard of collaboration with them in its planning.</p>
<p>Steps towards increased birthing options for Island women, towards an eventual birthing centre.</p>	<p>Advocates for birthing options are cautiously optimistic about government's plans to appoint a midwifery implementation task force.</p>

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS

June 2009 to June 2010 TREND



Towards somewhat better grades in 2011.

Government's grade from June 2008 to June 2009 was a D.

Main category goal	Analysis
<p>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.</p>	<p>There have been some important steps to assist Islanders in need this year, but the investments and initiatives are still not keeping pace with real-life needs. Council is puzzled by the shift from talking about poverty reduction to “social prosperity.” We are not sure what this term means. We continue to call for commitment to poverty reduction through a plan developed in collaboration with community-based organizations.</p>
Sub-category goals	Analysis
<p>Investment in affordable, accessible, appropriate housing, including housing designed to meet the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>While there were major investments in affordable housing last year, access to affordable housing remains a crisis for many families. Meanwhile, the cost of renting housing, especially in Charlottetown, seems to skyrocket and more and more apartment, condominium, and other housing developments cater to the high end. Council also has concerns about public-private partnership models for seniors’ housing in the Province, especially in light of recent negotiating challenges between a private seniors’ home operator and provincial officials.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities would like to see the Disability Services Review recommendations implemented to provide additional supports for people with disabilities to live independently.</p> <p>Social assistance rates have been boosted again, minimally, but are still not in line with costs of living. A review of the Social Assistance Act provided an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the Act, but with too few invited presenters, too few terms of reference, and not nearly enough time for research and well-considered response.</p>
<p>Improvements to the Employment Standards Act that improve working conditions and wages for non-unionized workers.</p>	<p>Council welcomes long-awaited positive changes to the Employment Standards Act and sees them as good steps towards better supporting women in the workplace. Increases to the minimum wage are also steps in the right direction. However, Council is disappointed that government over-rode its own committee’s recommendation on different minimum wages – and ignored clear public opinion – when it chose to retain the option to set multiple wage rates in Employment Standards legislation.</p>

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION June 2010 to June 2011

Council has several **highest priority** actions government could take in the coming twelve months to most significantly improve its grades on the 2011 Equality Report Card. These priorities are listed below.

The Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women is committed to working collaboratively with government whenever possible to help government achieve high grades in all categories of the Equality Report Card.

Supported transitions in early childhood care and education

Council will be looking for...

... government leadership and collaborative short-term and long-term planning as the early childhood care and education sector moves in exciting new directions. The move of kindergarten into the public school system and positive new investment and new approaches for early childhood care and education are both welcome. But short timelines for transitions have thrown the province's systems for childcare and early learning into uncertainty. Children, parents, educators, and childcare centre owner/operators need to see government leadership so that truly positive outcomes from government's historic investment in the early childhood sector can be realized.

Action on government's promises

Council will be looking for...

... publicly announced progress on promises government has made to strike a **Special Committee on the Role of the MLA**, propose PEI models for a **Domestic Violence Court Option**, and develop a cross-government **Poverty Reduction Strategy**. Council applauded government for setting the wheels in motion on these three items, but action appears to have stalled. It's time to provide progress updates for public accountability.

Action to apply gender- and diversity-based analysis (GBA)

Council will be looking for...

... movement on **recommendations by the PEI Gender-Based Analysis Committee**, including action on plans **to train members of the provincial civil service** in evidence-based gender and diversity analysis. GBA is a tool that allows government to predict potentially different and unequal outcomes of policy for women, men, and diversity groups. In Council's view, applying GBA systematically across government policy is the best way to ensure progress towards women's equality goals.



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