



Activities Update

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women



CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

This will be my last "Chairperson's Message" as Chairperson of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, as my five-year, non-renewable term on Council ends in January 2007. I look forward to seeing Executive Council make new appointments to the Advisory Council in the near future, and I offer all my best wishes to the next Chairperson. It is a challenging public role that connects you with women in the Island community in a powerful way and motivates you to work collaboratively with government to ensure positive change for women.

We've seen some positive change over the last five years. Highlights for me have included working with other organizations committed to equality, diversity, and good representation on the "Yes Coalition" during the 2005 plebiscite on electoral reform, as well as assisting the Council to develop its own, very specialized materials regarding how the proposed proportional representation model could benefit women; working with other women's organizations in PEI and across the country to respond the funding cuts and drastic changes in the criteria for the Status of Women Canada funding program; and working with Council members to develop a plan of action for more effectively moving forward improvements for PEI women, which has culminated in our new Equality Report Card.

In the past year, I am so pleased to see the development of a Women's Caucus, a bi-partisan

caucus made up of all elected women in the PEI Legislature, something that's not being done in any other province or territory in Canada. I am anticipating that this group will be a powerful force for policy development for women.

In June 2008, the Advisory Council will release its first Equality Report Card to assess government's actions and collaborations with women and equality-seeking groups. The Report Card project will be an important tool for collaborating with government. The Report Card reflects a process and priorities that come out of five years of working with Council to plan to improve the effectiveness of our actions to influence government policies and legislation. It will focus on issues such as woman abuse and access to justice for women, issues that come up constantly but change slowly.

In my five years as Chairperson, a special, and I think important, focus of the Advisory Council's work has been increasing the number of women in government. The evidence is clear from countries around the world who have higher percentages of women in government: these countries are able to make more, and faster, progress to support women's equality with policies and programs.

I will no doubt continue to work on behalf of Island women and women's equality goals in my individual volunteer and paid positions, and I will do this with a greater awareness of both barriers and opportunities to women who want to influence decision-makers. After my time as Chairperson, I will continue to see the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women as an ally with a unique and valuable link between government officials and equality-seekers in the community.

Kirstin Lund

Fall/Winter 2007



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**PEIACSW 2007 PURPLE RIBBON CAMPAIGN
Violence Against Women IS an Equality Issue!**

December 2007 marks the sixteenth year the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women has organized its Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence.

This year, the campaign is an exploration of male violence against women as an equality issue. According to Health Canada, "Violence against women, a prime area of concern as a health issue, is rooted in the social, economic and political inequality of women." Regrettably, girls between the ages of 12 and 18 are the most abused group of people in the world. It is clear that violence and the fear of violence prevent women from fully participating in society, and preventing violence is thus an important equality matter at the base of the Advisory Council's work.

With volunteer help and community support, the PEIACSW will distribute 30,000 purple ribbons pinned to bilingual bookmarks. Also available is a one page, bilingual information sheet that illustrates what equality in relationships looks like.



Canada World Youth participants Heather Dines (left) and Jingjin Xie (right) pin ribbons at the PEIACSW office in Charlottetown. They are only two of hundreds of Island volunteers who make the Purple Ribbon Campaign possible through their efforts.

Special thanks go out to Jingjin Xie and Heather Dines, Canada World Youth participants. They worked throughout the fall pinning ribbons to bookmarks, stuffing envelopes, and doing whatever was asked of them.

This year, again, the staff at Quilting B & More volunteered hours and hours to cutting reels of ribbons to the right length for pinning. With the help of Senator Percy Downe's office staff, the Campaign received 35,000 Canada-flag lapel pins to better secure the purple ribbons. Municipalities from across PEI offered sponsorship: Charlottetown, Stratford, Montague, Tignish, and Miscouche so far.

The Advisory Council is grateful! All these efforts make the Purple Ribbon Campaign possible.

**FIRST MOURN, THEN
WORK FOR CHANGE**

On December 6, 1989, fourteen women were murdered at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal. They were murdered because they were women. December 6 is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Memorial Services will be held across the Island to remember all women who have been victims of violence.

**MONTREAL MASSACRE
MEMORIAL SERVICES
December 6, 2007 – 12 noon**

**O'Leary United Church, O'Leary
For information call 859-3916 or
859-8849**

**Summerside Baptist Church,
Summerside
For information call 436-9856**

**Memorial Hall, Confederation
Centre, Charlottetown
For information call 368-4510**

**UPEI, Charlottetown
For more information call 628-
4332**

A flower of pinned Purple Ribbon bookmarks, created by Jingjin Xie.



NEW STATUS OF WOMEN MINISTER

With a change of government in the spring came a new person in the role of Minister Responsible for the Status of Women for PEI. The Advisory Council was pleased to welcome the Honourable Valerie Docherty, who was appointed by Premier Robert Ghiz as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and Minister of Tourism on June 12, 2007.

Public service has been the focus of Minister Docherty's career. She was employed in several government departments and has held a number of management positions over the years. In addition, she has taught the Business Information Technology Program at Holland College.

Minister Docherty and her husband live with their two sons in Elmwood, PEI, where they operate a family farm. Minister Docherty has been very active in her community with the Kingston Community Improvement Corporation as a member of the Board of Directors for Communities 13 Inc. She also chaired the operations committee during the construction of the APM Centre and has been active in local minor hockey teams and tournaments.

NEW WOMEN'S CAUCUS FOR PEI MLAs

The most exciting political development since the spring election has been the creation of a new Women's Caucus. The Women's Caucus, spear-headed and chaired by MLA Cynthia Dunsford, is made up of provincially elected women from both the political parties represented in the Legislature. It will create a unique space for women MLAs to get together to discuss issues special to them, especially in their lives as women in government.

We look forward to seeing recommendations for positive change for women coming out of the Women's Caucus work, and we hope their collective insight into policy issues and legislation to benefit Island women will be championed by Minister Docherty and welcomed among her Cabinet colleagues at decision-making time.



Hon. Valerie Docherty is PEI's Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

EQUALITY FOR PEI REPORT CARD

During the provincial election, the ACSW launched a new evaluation process. The annual Equality Report Card will measure government's successes and areas that need improvement in moving towards equality for PEI women.

Council members set priorities for the Report Card by reviewing recommendations that the Advisory Council has made to government over the last seven years in these areas:



- making women's equality a priority
- women in decision-making
- family violence prevention
- women's economic status
- supports for caregiving
- women's health
- access to justice

The Advisory Council will also pay attention to government's willingness to work collaboratively with community organizations and its commitment to using analysis that looks at gender and diversity. It is the Advisory Council's goal to work with government to help its departments achieve excellent grades at the end of each year.

2007 PUBLICATIONS

available: <http://www.gov.pe.ca/acsw>

- Orientation to the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women (September 2007)
- Response to the Final Report of the Employment Standards Review Panel (August 2007)
- Introduction to the "Equality for PEI Report Card" (May 2007)
- Rural Poverty in Prince Edward Island. Some Considerations for Island Women – Presentation to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (February 2007)
- Fact Sheet: National Coalition Denounces Cuts and Changes to Status of Women Canada (December 2006)

News Releases & Editorials

Autumn

- National Coalition of Advisory Councils Meets
- Advisory Council Supports Citizen's Assembly for PEI
- Tribute to Lyle Brehaut, a Leader for Women's Equality
- Opposition Hears Council Concerns Power Is the Issue, in Harassment Case New, Improved Appointment Process

Spring

- Too Few Women Appointed to Cabinet Women in Decision-Making
- High Expectations for Cabinet Liberal Election Promises on Equality Violence Prevention and Family Law Access
- Tax Break on Babies' Needs Welcome Women in Leaders' Debates
- Not Much for Women in Leaders' Debate

Report Card on Equality

- Objectionable Content in Article on FASD
- ACSW/LEAF Call for Reinstatement of Court Challenges Program
- Funding for Family Law Centre

Winter

- Respect for Those in Public Life
- Praise for Response on HPV Vaccine
- Local Advisory Council Saddened by Death of Doris Anderson
- Women and Political Influence
- Change Is Possible in Preventing Violence

A ROUND-UP OF 2007 ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS

March 16 - Charlottetown Planning the Equality Report Card

Council used its March 16 meeting to plan the Equality Report Card and to follow up on other priorities from strategic planning. Using consensus-based decision-making, Council identified priority areas for the Report Card to evaluate. Council then decided to publish an introduction to the Report Card and to distribute this introduction as a resource for women in the anticipated provincial election, to raise awareness of current issues of concern to women and their families. Following the meeting, Council consulted by e-mail to select the three highest priority recommendations for the Report Card to assess.

June 5 - Summerside Aboriginal Women's Experiences

Council's June meeting took place at the Mi'kmaq Confederacy offices in Summerside, and several folks from the Aboriginal communities of PEI responded to Council member Roseanne Sark's invitation to meet for informal discussion. Council members heard an overview of projects currently underway out of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy and were told that interest shown by the Advisory Council in Aboriginal issues helps women in their healing journey. Council also heard about the

record interest in the Aboriginal Women's Association's recent elections, and about Premier Pat Binns's leadership in hosting a Premier's Summit to learn about the realities of Aboriginal women's lives. Council learned about problems facing on-reserve elders when they reach their senior years and have to go off-reserve to access services such as dental programs and nursing care. The Council outlined upcoming work and invited Aboriginal women representatives to attend a future Council meeting with a new Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, to keep the connection and conversation going.

September 24 - Montague Meeting with the Official Opposition

The highlight of Council's fall meeting in Montague was a productive luncheon with representatives of the Official Opposition, led by Interim PC Leader Olive Crane.

The Opposition heard from Council members about Aboriginal communities preparing for an influx of compensation money to residential school survivors, who will be vulnerable to fraud and even violence and who require knowledgeable and supportive front-line services. They heard about women's concern over the way complaints are dealt with in professional organizations such as the College

of Physicians and Surgeons. They heard about the effects of federal cuts to adult basic education and literacy programs and the impact on women, especially in the Island's rural communities. Council identified some significant gaps in government services for women and families. The lack of full-day kindergarten, for instance, leaves a child-care gap for families, and in some families, access to subsidies cuts off before the child is eligible to enroll. An even more serious gap is lack of protection under the Child Protection Act for youth ages 16 to 18 and the inability of these youth to access services, even if they are homeless or trying to leave violent relationships. The Child Protection Act also continues to be a barrier to many adult women in situations of violence and abuse; they fear they will lose their children if they report the violence in their homes. Council spoke about the whole group of women who are victims of violence but who do not report to police for various reasons — for instance, that they feel they failed to protect their kids, they are concerned the system focuses on the mom and not the abuser, they have past negative experiences with police, or they don't have faith in the legal system. Concerns about aging women in the community — including lack of affordable housing, lack of support after relationship breakups unless there are children involved, and shamefully low social assistance rates for single people living alone — led to a wider and well-informed discussion of the urgency for expanded family law legal aid in the province.

Next Meeting: Council meets again November 26 and will launch the Purple Ribbon Campaign at that time with a press conference featuring Council members, Premier Robert Ghiz, and Minister Responsible Valerie Docherty.

Are you interested in sitting on the Advisory Council on the Status of Women? You can put your name forward through the new PARTICIPATE IN PEI process. Advisory Council Staff would be happy to provide more information or to help you prepare a letter of interest.



Above: ACSW Director Lisa Murphy (centre) thanks and acknowledges outgoing Minister Responsible Gail Shea and Council members Aleah MacLellan and Darcie Pike-Wilkie (right). Staff members Becky Tramley and Sandy Kowalik (left) received service awards to mark Becky's 20 years with Council and Sandy's 5+ years.



Council wished goodbye and good luck to Catherine McAleer, who left Council this summer to teach in Hong Kong.

NATIONAL COALITION OF PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL ADVISORY COUNCILS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN MEETS

Despite the erosion of support for women's equality on the national level, regional women's organizations are increasingly united around issues that matter to women. On October 19 and 20 in Ottawa, representatives of the PEI-ACSW chaired a meeting of provincial and territorial member organizations of the national Coalition of Advisory Councils on the Status of Women. Advisory Council folks from across Canada used the meeting to compare notes on their work and on national issues.

The Coalition recognized that changes to programs for women's organizations have meant hard times for women working for equality across Canada this past year. The cuts to funding have been tough, but limits on advocacy for equality have been even tougher. It is more and more important for groups like our provincial and territorial advisory councils, which have mandates to work in their own regions, to get together to look at the national dimensions of the issues we deal with on behalf of women.

The Coalition stressed what Advisory Councils have in common: we all work on access to family law legal aid for women, adequate supports for caring for children and seniors, and the elimination of violence against women. Coalition members learn a lot from each other across the provinces and territories about how to make a difference on these issues.

The Coalition members appreciated a talk from guest speaker Rosemary Thompson, Deputy Ottawa Bureau Chief for CTV, who shared strategies for bringing women's issues to the forefront regionally and nationally.

One issue the Coalition discussed is the need for coordinated regulations and enforcements among Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons across Canada, especially in cases where a doctor is suspended in one jurisdiction but seeks to continue practising medicine somewhere else in Canada.



Back Row: Donna Olsen-Hakongak and Stephanie Williams, Qullit Nunavut; Rosella Melanson, New Brunswick; Danielle Finney, Newfoundland and Labrador; Kirstin Lund, Lisa Murphy, and Jane Ledwell, PEI; Marlene Bertrand, Manitoba

Front Row: Sharon Thomas and Lorraine Phaneuf, Northwest Territories; Leslie MacLeod, Newfoundland and Labrador

Another focus for the Coalition's advocacy in the coming year will be supporting Women's Network PEI's recommendations around improving maternity and parental leave and benefits.

The Coalition of Advisory Councils also made its first suggestions for a "gender budgeting" project being led by FAFIA (the Feminist Alliance for International Action). FAFIA's project will make input into federal budget priorities with women's equality goals in mind. The Coalition asserted that women need to be counted in all aspects of the federal budget, and the budget needs to acknowledge the ways economic and financial decisions affect women in different ways than men, given that women are still not equal in Canada.

The national Coalition of Advisory Councils on the Status of Women brings together provincial and territorial advisory councils. These Councils work with communities and governments in their home regions to advise decision-makers on policy and legislation to improve the status of women and girls.

The Coalition will meet next late in 2008 and hopes to meet with the federal Minister Responsible for the Status of Women at that time. The Coalition co-chairs for 2008 are the Northwest Territories and Qullit Nunavut Councils.



Hon. Josée Verner is currently Canada's Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

... into the New Year

IWD 2007/2008

Last year, a coalition of community organizations came together to plan International Women's Day events. This group, the Together in Courage Committee, used International Women's Day 2007 as an opportunity to celebrate Island women labour leaders. In 2008, look forward to a celebration of Island women's leadership in environmental action.



International Women's Day "Leaders Among Us" Celebration. March 8, 2007: Women leaders of PEI's six largest labour unions and an international guest held a panel discussion of their experience. Pictured, from left, are Marie Burge, panel moderator; Mary MacNeil, Public Service Alliance of Canada; Tammy Chaisson, International Union of Operating Engineers; Donald MacDonald, Canadian Union of Public Employees; Margaret Duffy, PEI Nurses' Union; Shelley Ward, Union of Public Sector Employees; Seana Evans-Renaud, PEI Teachers' Federation; Alejandrina Ibanez, CUSO partner and Bolivian social activist; and Cathy Ronahan, interpreter.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS WITH WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

In the coming weeks and months, PEI Advisory Council members and staff will be consulting with women in their home communities in several locations across the Island. Council looks forward to listening first hand to the issues and concerns women are facing in their homes and families in rural PEI. The Community Consultations are being facilitated by PEI Women's Institutes across the province. The PEI Advisory Council is very pleased to be partnering with the PEIWI, which has for so long engaged women in valuable work to better their communities. More details will be forthcoming in Community Events Notices.

COMMUNITY EVENTS NOTICES

Community Events Notices go out by email (usually on Fridays) to our Central List. If you are not receiving notices and would like to, please send your e-mail address to peiacsw@isn.net and put "add to Central List" in the subject line. If you are sending in notices please send in plain text, not formatted in colour or weird fonts. Community Events listings are now also posted weekly to the PEIACSW's new blog, *Women's Equality Prince Edward Island*, at peiacsw.wordpress.com. We welcome visits and comments on the blog, which will be a spot for sharing fresh and current information from the Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

COUNCIL

Kirstin Lund, Chairperson
Stratford
Elaine Rabinowitz, Vice-Chairperson, Breadalbane
Roseanne Sark, Summerside
Sadie MacKenzie, Montague
Sister Norma Gallant, Wellington
Isabelle Christian, Stratford



STAFF

Lisa Murphy, Executive Director
Jane Ledwell, Researcher/Policy Analyst
Becky Tramley, Administrative Assistant (part-time)
Sandy Kowalik, Purple Ribbon Coordinator

CONTACT INFORMATION

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women
PO Box 2000
Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8

Location: Sherwood Business Centre,
161 St. Peter's Road

Phone: 902-368-4510

Fax: 902-368-3269

E-mail: peiacsw@isn.net

Website: www.gov.pe.ca/acsw

Blog: peiacsw.wordpress.com



*Members & Staff of the
PEI Advisory Council
on the Status of Women
wish you a season of
peace & goodwill.*