

Business Plan

2026-2029

Office of Women
and Gender Equality





MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister of Women and Gender Equality, I am pleased to present the Office of Women and Gender Equality Business Plan for the period of April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to fostering a province that is inclusive and welcoming to all people. In support of this commitment, the Office of Women and Gender Equality has been tasked with advancing the social, economic, cultural, and legal status of women and gender-diverse individuals throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The 2026-2029 Office of Women and Gender Equality Business Plan outlines priority areas of gender-based violence prevention, social and economic well-being, and Gender-Based Analysis Plus throughout the province. The Office is committed to continued collaboration with provincial government departments and agencies, community partners, advocates, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations, with the understanding that this collaboration is essential to achieving the outcomes identified within these priority areas.

This Business Plan has been prepared and submitted in accordance with the provisions of the **Transparency and Accountability Act** for a Category Two entity. As Minister, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and for the achievement of the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Sincerely,

Hon. Lela Evans
Minister of Women and Gender Equality

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Overview

The Office of Women and Gender Equality is the central agency dedicated to advancing the social, economic, cultural, and legal standing of women and gender-diverse people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. The Office is housed within the Executive Council, and staff report to the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. The Office supports the research and development of provincial policies, programs, services, and budgets, to encourage equality within the Provincial Government's legislation and decision-making processes. In 2025-26, the Office had a core team of 16 staff, including the Minister's Office.

Further information regarding the Office of Women and Gender Equality can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/wge/>.

Mandate

The Office of Women and Gender Equality supports an 'all of government' approach to the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus across all Government of Newfoundland and Labrador programs, services, policies, legislation, and budgets. The Office works closely with community and government partners toward a shared goal of advancing the social, economic, cultural, and legal status of women and gender-diverse people throughout the province. The Office leads initiatives that encourage, promote, and support women and gender-diverse people in leadership roles, as well as funding community partner violence prevention and equality-related initiatives. Through ongoing collaboration with equity-seeking organizations, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations, the Office continues to work toward making Newfoundland and Labrador a safer, more accessible, and inclusive place for everyone.

Within this mandate, the Office of Women and Gender Equality is responsible for the **Status of Women Advisory Council Act** and holds partial responsibility (Pay Equity) for the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**, in conjunction with Government Services.

Budget

The Office of Women and Gender Equality is located at the Confederation Building's West Block in St. John's. For 2026-27, the Office of Women and Gender Equality's total budget is \$9,819,300, inclusive of the Minister's Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Lines of Business

Office of Women and Gender Equality staff are responsible for the following lines of business:

Policy Analysis and Advisory Services

Through guidance, training and general support of the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus, the Office assists Provincial Government departments and agencies to adopt effective strategies for achieving gender equality. This includes identifying gaps and potential negative impacts on women, girls, gender-diverse people, and subsequently working collaboratively to address these issues. The broad and thorough application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus moves the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador closer to meaningful, and lasting gender equality.

Information Collection and Communication Services

The Office of Women and Gender Equality is responsible for gathering and analyzing information from a wide range of sources to support the development and implementation of evidence-based policy. This is accomplished through undertaking research and analysis, including jurisdictional scans, secondary research, content analysis, and quantitative analysis. This allows the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to better identify systemic inequities, knowledge gaps, and ultimately, to gauge the overall social, economic, cultural, and legal status of women and gender-diverse people in the province. Central to this process is regular consultation with equity-seeking organizations, and other community and Indigenous partners, to ensure that solutions to ongoing and emerging issues are informed by those with lived experience.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention

Gender-based violence continues to be a significant issue in Newfoundland and Labrador. Gender-based violence is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful social norms. Its persistence continues to affect the social, economic, cultural, and legal fabric of the province, and addressing it requires coordinated, long-term action. The Office of Women and Gender Equality is committed to gender-based violence prevention and works collaboratively with violence prevention organizations, community partners, Indigenous Groups and Organizations, Provincial Government departments and agencies, and other governments, to ensure that grassroots knowledge shapes the development of lasting, systemic solutions in this province. Tackling the deep-rooted inequalities that enable violence, is essential to building a province where everyone can live free from fear of violence, realize safety in their communities, and reach their full potential.

Grants Program

The Office of Women and Gender Equality manages the distribution of non-repayable grants to equity-seeking organizations, and other community and Indigenous partners, supporting targeted initiatives that elevate the status of women and gender-diverse people throughout the province. This includes funding for the strategic delivery of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. The funding provided by the Office of Women and Gender Equality helps to empower partners to dismantle systemic barriers, enhance public safety, and drive long-term equality throughout the province.

Working within Government

Advancing gender equality is a shared responsibility across Provincial Government departments and agencies, and the Office of Women and Gender Equality plays a key coordinating role in this work. The Office collaborates with departments and agencies and acts as a catalyst within government, to heighten awareness and drive meaningful change. This includes active participation in cross-departmental committees such as the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network, the Equity and Resilience Advisory Council, the Accessibility Oversight Committee, the Poverty Reduction and Prevention Interdepartmental Steering Committee and the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Committee.

Acting as Federal-Provincial Liaison

The Office of Women and Gender Equality continues to have a strong working relationship with our federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts. Through ongoing participation in intergovernmental working groups, including those overseen by Women and Gender Equality Canada, and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Secretariat, the Office engages on a broad range of critical issues including women's economic participation and prosperity, leadership and democratic participation, gender-

based violence and access to justice, Gender-Based Analysis Plus, and missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Working with the Community

The Office of Women and Gender Equality actively collaborate with women's organizations and equity-seeking groups, including consulting with women and gender-diverse people from various backgrounds, to understand the issues which most impact them. This approach works to ensure their perspectives help shape government strategies to improve their economic and social well-being. The Office also partners with businesses, labour organizations, and community groups on initiatives of shared interest that work to improve the status of women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the province.

Primary Clients

The Office of Women and Gender Equality works with a broad network of community and Indigenous partners throughout the province. In 2025-26, the Office provided \$6.765 million (including National Action Plan funding) in grants and core operational funding to key partners. Beyond provincial partnerships, the Office also collaborates with federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and other federal, provincial, and territorial partners on shared initiatives, to advance gender equality and address issues of concern (such as missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls) in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country.

Vision

The vision of the Office of Women and Gender Equality is true social, economic, cultural, and legal equality for women and gender-diverse people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Strategic Issue 1 – Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is widespread throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Rates are increasing, affecting individuals, families and communities and require a unified and comprehensive response. The Office of Women and Gender Equality plays an essential role in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to end gender-based violence.

In 2023, the province negotiated a \$13.6 million, four-year bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada, through the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. The province is required to match the federal contribution on an annual basis. The Office of Women and Gender Equality is responsible for managing the disbursement of funds from the National Action Plan to address gender-based violence in our province.

The bilateral agreement with the government of Canada is set to conclude at the end of the 2026-27 fiscal year. The Office is committed to working with government and community partners to advocate to the Federal Government for the continuation of funding for for the entirety of the 10 years of the plan's duration.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality funds two crisis hotlines, which provide services to individuals experiencing crises related to gender-based violence. The crisis lines are partially funded by a three-year bilateral agreement negotiated in 2023 between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada. The original bilateral agreement concluded at the end of the 2025-26 fiscal year.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality continues to work with the Government of Canada to determine the next steps for this funding agreement, to ensure these services can continue.

The Office provides annual funding to support the Intimate Partner Violence Units with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, including one Royal Newfoundland Constabulary officer and Management Analyst, as well as one officer and one Intelligence Analyst at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

On May 27, 2026, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador officially declared gender-based violence an epidemic, and announced the establishment of a Task Force to End Gender-Based Violence. The task force is composed of 12 members, including six from outside government, and six individuals representing the Office of Women and Gender Equality, Education and Early Childhood Development, Health and Community Services, Justice and Public Safety, Social Supports and Well-Being, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Goal:

By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will continue to play a central role in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's response to gender-based violence, by advancing policy development, community-based action, and evidence-informed decision-making.

Goal Indicators:

- By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have worked with the Federal Government, Provincial Government, Indigenous and community partners, to ensure continued funding for the necessary services we fund to address gender-based violence beyond March 31, 2027.
- By March 31, 2029, the Task Force to End Gender-based Violence will lead and participate in engagement and consultation and propose recommendations to government that support ending gender-based violence.
- By March 31, 2029, the task force will have guided the Office of Women and Gender Equality in conducting research, analysis and interdepartmental coordination or support, as required, to undertake its work and will review and analyze the results of that work.

Objective 2026-27:

By March 31, 2027, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will work to secure funding beyond the end of the 2026-27 fiscal year to ensure the continuation of necessary services to combat gender-based violence and enhance provincial leadership in gender-based violence prevention by establishing a Task Force to End Gender-Based Violence.

Objective Indicators:

- Increase number of departments engaged in cross-government coordination mechanisms related to gender-based violence prevention.
- Increase the instances of Gender-Based Analysis Plus being applied in provincial policy and planning processes, in relation to gender-based violence.
- Clear priorities outlined with Indigenous partners, community organizations, and equity-deserving groups including through work with the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council.

Objective 2027-28:

By March 31, 2028, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will support increased community and system capacity to prevent gender-based violence through targeted engagement, initiatives and recommendations of the Task Force to End Gender-Based Violence, as well as knowledge-sharing, and support for sustainable prevention approaches.

Objective Indicators:

- Improved collaboration with community-based organizations by supporting prevention and early-intervention initiatives.

- Strengthened relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations to support culturally relevant prevention approaches.
- Enhanced inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and gender-based perspectives in prevention strategies.

Objective 2028-29:

By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will advance trauma-informed accountability through recommendations of the Task Force to End Gender-Based Violence in ways that prioritize survivor safety, lived experience, and cultural responsiveness, and by mobilizing learning to inform future policy and program decisions.

Strategic Issue 2 – Social and Economic Well-Being

Women and gender-diverse people continue to encounter systemic obstacles when trying to access essential resources and opportunities across economic and social environments. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador acknowledges that disparities in resources or discrimination based on race, ability, education, employment, income, and/or social relationships can have a negative effect on the well-being of women and gender-diverse people throughout the province. To help challenge these inequalities, the Office of Women and Gender Equality collaborates with government departments and agencies on initiatives including, but not limited to the following:

- Exploring opportunities related to the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act** across public bodies and the private sector to support efforts and narrow the gender wage gap.
- Supporting menstrual equity efforts across educational institutions and community organizations to help reduce period poverty (the inability to afford or access menstrual products, adequate hygiene facilities, and reproductive education).

- Contributing to the development and implementation of Gender, Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Plans for large-scale resource development projects and Women's Employment Plans for medium-size commercial developments.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality continues to work with community organizations and industry partners to encourage the recruitment and retention of women and gender diverse people in underrepresented sectors including the skilled trades, the natural resource sector, and executive leadership roles. These efforts improve the representation of women and gender diverse people in leadership and high-earning occupations throughout the province, supporting the incorporation of insights, talents, and expertise that come with a diversified workforce.

Goal:

The Office of Women and Gender Equality will strengthen all of government collaboration for addressing systemic issues affecting women and gender diverse people, with particular focus on pay equity, menstrual equity, and inclusive workforce participation, to promote economic and social well-being.

Goal Indicators:

- Ongoing engagement with government departments and agencies on matters relating to the economic and social well-being of women and gender diverse people to support the consideration of gender equality implications in policies and programs.
- Continued community collaboration with partners, including Indigenous Governments and Organizations, on issues such as socio-economic well-being, health care access, and the advancement of women and gender diverse people in leadership and trades.

Objective 2026-27:

By March 31, 2027, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have reviewed the menstrual equity initiative, with the objective of supporting access to menstrual products for students and vulnerable populations.

Objective Indicators:

- The Office of Women and Gender Equality will gather quantitative and qualitative data on the impact, and outcome of the menstrual equity program, to inform planning and administration beyond March 31, 2027.
- The Office will analyze reporting information from program partners to determine if, and how the program can expand to best address period poverty in our provincial schools.
- Recommendations are developed on sustainable supply and delivery options for providing menstrual products throughout the province. Recommendations are based on a review of the menstrual equity program and on-going consultation with community organizations and corporate sponsors throughout the 2026-27 fiscal year.

Objective 2027-28:

By March 31, 2028, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have engaged with other departments, public bodies and private sector partners to provide informed recommendations for further direction from government on changes to the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**.

Objective 2028-29:

By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will support the participation of more women and gender-diverse people in training and employment in

the skilled trades, natural resource extraction, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), by strengthening the effectiveness of Gender Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Plans and Women's Employment Plans, and implementing additional, evidence based, supports for women and gender-diverse people in these sectors.

Strategic Issue 3: Gender-Based Analysis Plus

Gender-Based Analysis Plus is a critical analytical tool designed to assist with developing responsive, equitable, and cost-effective policies, programs, initiatives, and legislation. The 'plus' in Gender-Based Analysis Plus asks users to think beyond gender, and examine how an individual's age, race, ethnicity, language, disability, geography, culture, education, and income inform their lived experience.

The primary goal of Gender-Based Analysis Plus is to ensure that gender and other diversity characteristics are thoughtfully considered in all Provincial Government programs and policies that impact the public. Applying Gender-Based Analysis Plus early in the development of programs, services, policies, legislation, and budgets improves outcomes and leads to better-informed decision-making, as well as potential cost-saving measures.

The Provincial Government is dedicated to implementing Gender-Based Analysis Plus across all departments. Making Gender-Based Analysis Plus a priority supports the creation of inclusive policies and practices that serve the diverse needs of all residents. While supporting Gender-Based Analysis Plus is a core responsibility of the Office of Women and Gender Equality, with a focus on ensuring proper training, effective application, and maintaining the relevance and efficiency of this analytical tool - all departments are expected to apply it to their work.

Goal:

By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will continue to support the ongoing integration of Gender-Based Analysis Plus across the provincial public sector to better reflect the diversity of Newfoundland and Labrador and foster a culture of inclusivity.

Goal Indicators:

- Promoted the sustained use of Gender-Based Analysis Plus principles within various government departments and entities.
- Shared Gender-Based Analysis Plus knowledge and resources with partners and the public in new and innovative ways.
- Encouraged the consideration of intersectional perspectives in the development of programs and initiatives.
- Strengthened collaboration to improve departmental awareness of equality issues.

Objective 2026-27:

By March 31, 2027, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have taken steps to further align all government activities with the core understandings of Gender-Based Analysis Plus.

Objective Indicators:

- Engaged with departments to discuss the ongoing relevance of Gender-Based Analysis Plus in their daily operations and promote training opportunities.
- Launched the Gender-Based Analysis Plus eLearning tool to enable the public service to better understand and apply Gender-Based Analysis Plus principles in all government policy and program development.

- Launched an online-based, public-facing Gender-Based Analysis Plus analytical tool for use by the public and non-government stakeholders.
- Refined existing resources to ensure they remain applicable to all public service employees.

Objective 2027-28:

By March 31, 2028, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will develop reporting and evaluation methodology to evaluate the dissemination and application of Gender-based Analysis Plus across the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Objective 2028-29:

By March 31, 2029, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have used the reporting and evaluation methodology developed in fiscal year 2027-28, to generate initial findings regarding the dissemination and application of Gender-based Analysis Plus across the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

Annex A: Strategic Directions

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has identified the following strategic directions for the 2026-2029 planning cycle. This plan was prepared in consideration of the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 1: Lower taxes

Strategic Direction 2: Better Healthcare

Strategic Direction 3: Safer Communities