

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Office of Women and
Gender Equality



MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister Responsible for the Office of Women and Gender Equality, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the period April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. This Report has been prepared in accordance with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's **Transparency and Accountability Act** provisions. The Office of Women and Gender Equality is a Category 2 Provincial Government entity, and I am accountable for the results reported in this document.

Advancing the social, economic, cultural, and legal status of women and gender-diverse individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador remains a top priority. Continued engagement and collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, including government departments and agencies, community organizations, and Indigenous Governments and Organizations, are essential to becoming a society where the voices and contributions of women and gender-diverse individuals are respected and valued.

One of the highlights of the 2023-24 fiscal year was the signing of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, a historical, four-year bilateral agreement with Women and Gender Equality Canada, resulting in \$13.6 million in new funding to invest in violence prevention-related initiatives throughout the province.

Through the consistent application of Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets, coupled with our efforts to identify and implement action-focused solutions to gender-based violence, I strongly believe we can, and will, advance the status of women and gender-diverse individuals in our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Parsons".

Hon. Pam Parsons

Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality

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Departmental Overview

Organizational Structure

The Office of Women and Gender Equality is a central agency within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador structure, which supports the development of policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets to advance the social, economic, cultural, and legal status of women and gender-diverse individuals in the province. The Office is housed within Executive Council and staff report to the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality is in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador on the fourth floor of the Confederation Building, West Block. Further information about the Office can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/wge/office/>.

Staff and Budget

In 2023-24, the Office of Women and Gender Equality had a core staff compliment of seven permanent and three temporary positions. For 2023-24, the Office of Women and Gender Equality had a total budget of \$5,468,700 inclusive of the Minister's Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Division	# of Employees	Budget
Minister's Office	3	\$258,100
Office of Women and Gender Equality	13	\$4,767,000
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women	4	\$443,600

Highlights and Partnerships

Highlights

National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is taking significant steps to change our collective approach to prevent and end gender-based violence. We must change attitudes, tackle stigma, and stop discrimination as they perpetuate the normalization of gender-based violence. This is what's needed to make long-term, systemic change.

Gender-based violence is not only an issue facing women and girls. Certain populations, such as Indigenous women and girls, Black and racialized women, women living in Northern, rural, and remote communities, non-status and temporary status migrants, immigrants and refugees, Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, plus (2SLGBTQQA+) individuals, persons with disabilities, children and youth, and seniors, also experience disproportionately higher rates of gender-based violence.

In 2023, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador negotiated a \$13.6 million, four-year bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada through the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence (2023-24: \$2.60M; 2024-25: \$3.65M; 2025-26: \$3.65M; 2026-27: \$3.65M). The Province is required to match the Federal contribution on an annual basis. This means over \$5.2 million was spent in 2023-24 on gender-based violence prevention initiatives. For the duration of the four-year agreement, more than \$27.2 million will be spent in this province to help prevent and end gender-based violence.

The National Action Plan consists of five pillars that identify existing challenges and opportunities for action where Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments can advance work: Pillar One: Support for victims, survivors and their families; Pillar Two: Prevention; Pillar Three: Responsive justice system; Pillar Four: Implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and, Pillar Five: Social infrastructure and enabling environment.

In 2023-24, government awarded over 30 organizations throughout the province with approximately \$2.6 million in funding under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, with over 20 per cent of the money going directly to groups and organizations in Labrador. Of the total funding distributed, approximately 30 per cent went to Indigenous Groups and Organizations. We will continue to work with our Indigenous partners, including the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council, to further build on

these investments. Approximately 45 per cent of the 2023-24 funding went directly to violence prevention sector groups and organizations in rural areas (i.e., outside St. John's/Corner Brook). Many of the groups funded within St. John's serve province wide.

Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act

The **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**, passed during the fall 2022 sitting of the House of Assembly, reflects the Provincial Government's support of equitable pay practices in the province and builds on continued efforts to support women and gender-diverse people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Public consultations to inform the development of the regulations for the Act were completed in May 2023. Work to develop the regulations is ongoing and involves the Office of Women and Gender Equality, Department of Environment and Climate Change, and Treasury Board Secretariat.

This legislation will continue to progress pay equity and pay transparency measures.

The **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act** contains pay transparency provisions that will make Newfoundland and Labrador a leader in Canada with prescriptive pay transparency requirements for the public and private sectors.

Pay equity provisions in this legislation will apply to all public sector employers with 10 or more employees; and require public sector employers to implement compensation practices to value jobs based on skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. The provisions also require a commissioner to be designated under the **Public Service Commission Act** to be the Pay Equity Officer.

Pay transparency provisions in the legislation will apply to employers in the public and private sectors and require employers to include information regarding pay in publicly advertised job postings. The provisions will prohibit employers from requesting pay history information from job applicants, and from penalizing an employee or applicant for inquiring about or disclosing pay information or requesting that an employer comply with the Act. The provisions also require certain employers to prepare pay transparency reports.

Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council

In November 2022, the Provincial Government announced the establishment of the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council, as a further commitment from the Provincial Government to work collaboratively and in partnership with Indigenous Governments and Organizations to prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

The formation of a Reconciliation Council was proposed in the "Hear Our Voices" report, created by the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee and presented to the Provincial Government in July 2022.

The goal of the Reconciliation Council is to coordinate and lead meaningful action to address existing challenges and obstacles for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in the areas of culture, health and wellness, justice, and human security.

The Reconciliation Council is composed of 11 members, including five Provincial Government representatives and six Indigenous women representatives. There are three Co-Chairs: one appointed to represent government, and two Elders appointed by the Provincial Indigenous Women's Steering Committee.

The inaugural meeting took place on June 28, 2023, in St. John's, and included work to finalize a Terms of Reference. Subsequent meetings were held on September 26 and 27, 2023 and on February 21, 2024.

The work of the Reconciliation Council is fostering positive change, advancing reconciliation, and building a more just and equitable future for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Partnerships

The Office of Women and Gender Equality works collaboratively with many stakeholder organizations to advance the status of women and gender-diverse individuals. In 2023-24, the Office provided grants and core operational funding in the amount of \$6,368,200 million to key partners, including the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Status of Women councils, Violence Prevention Newfoundland and Labrador organizations, Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador, Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, End Sexual Violence NL, Safe Harbour Outreach Project (a project of the St. John's Status of Women Council), and Coalition Against the Sexual Exploitation of Youth (a project of Thrive).

The Office of Women and Gender Equality works collaboratively with Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women on initiatives to advance the status of women and gender-diverse individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout the country.

Report on Performance

The Office of Women and Gender Equality's 2023-26 Business Plan identifies economic and social well-being, gender-based violence, and Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) as strategic priorities. This year the Office is reporting on its success in achieving the objectives outlined for 2023-24.

Issue #1 – Economic and Social Well-Being

The economic and social well-being of women and gender-diverse individuals remains a top priority for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Various external and intersectional factors such as health, housing, food security, safety, cultural and political participation, race, ability, education, employment, income, social relationships, and supports directly and indirectly impact gender equity in our province, country, and world. The Provincial Government recognizes the inequities that women and gender-diverse individuals face daily, and has taken concrete, long-term measures to help alleviate such inequities.

Identifying, addressing, and actively working to reduce systemic economic and social barriers that hinder women and gender-diverse individuals is important to achieve equitable participation in the economy, an essential first step towards increasing labour market participation and social engagement. Designing and implementing policies, program and initiatives that improve economic and social well-being, such as mandating an 'all of government' approach to the application of GBA+ on all policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets, and the implementation of Women's Employment Plans, as well as Gender Equity and Diversity Plans, are some steps being taken by the Provincial Government to create a more equitable province for all.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have strengthened an 'all of government' approach to address systemic barriers faced by women and gender-diverse individuals that impact economic and social well-being.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have worked with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Department of Justice and Public Safety to draft regulations for the **Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act**.

2023-24 Work Accomplished

The following chart highlights the successful work accomplished by the Office, in the areas of economic and social well-being for the 2023-24 reporting cycle.

Indicators	Results (2023-24)
Completed consultations with targeted stakeholders and sought feedback from the public to inform the drafting of regulations for the Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act .	Public consultations to inform the development of the regulations for the Act commenced in February 2023 and were completed in May 2023. The consultation process included an online questionnaire through engageNL, an opportunity for stakeholders to provide written submissions, as well as in-person and virtual meetings. In-person meetings were held in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, St. John's, and Grand Falls-Windsor.
Worked with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Treasury Board Secretariat, and the Department of Justice and Public Safety to draft regulations for the Act.	Work to develop the regulations is ongoing and involves the Office of Women and Gender Equality, the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Department of Justice and Public Safety and Treasury Board Secretariat.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have undertaken initiatives to encourage, promote, support, and retain women and gender-diverse people in leadership roles, including running for elected office.

2024-25 Indicators

- Provided feedback and recommendations to government regarding economic and social well-being issues affecting women and gender-diverse people's participation in leadership positions.
- Represented the Office of Women and Gender Equality on initiatives to collaborate on addressing women and gender-diverse economic and social well-being and leadership.
- Monitored data pertaining to policies, programs, and stakeholder initiatives.

Issue #2 – Gender-based Violence

The Provincial Government is committed to working collaboratively with community stakeholders and Indigenous partners to implement long-term, systemic solutions aimed at addressing the root causes of gender-based violence. Violence is a pervasive social, economic, cultural, and legal problem that is rooted in varying types of inequality that continue to exist and flourish in our society - sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and other biased attitudes. Violence destroys relationships and community supports, and has devastating long-term impacts on survivors, families, and communities. Ensuring grassroots knowledge and expertise is utilized to inform policies, programs, legislation, and frontline services for survivors of violence is essential to creating a society where women and gender-diverse individuals can live free from the threat of violence and reach their full potential.

On November 23, 2023, the Office of Women and Gender Equality hosted the annual flag raising and proclamation signing event at Confederation Building to mark the start of 16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, also known as the Purple Ribbon Campaign. In addition to the flag raising, Confederation Building was lit purple from November 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10, 2023 (World Human Rights Day).

Goal

By March 31, 2026, in collaboration with the Federal Government, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have worked with community partners and Provincial Government departments and agencies to implement an intersectional, research-based, culturally-sensitive approach to the prevention of gender-based violence and corresponding results framework.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have entered into a bilateral agreement with Women and Gender Equality Canada to implement a four-year, provincially-based, regionally focused gender-based violence action plan.

2023-24 Work Accomplished

The following chart highlights the successful work accomplished by the Office of Women and Gender Equality around violence prevention for the 2023-24 reporting cycle.

Indicators	Results (2023-24)
Through the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council, the Office of Women and Gender Equality collaborated with Indigenous women's organizations and Provincial Government departments to address the disproportionate amount of systemic violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.	The Office of Women and Gender Equality worked collaboratively with Indigenous Governments and Organizations throughout the province, including through the Provincial Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council, to coordinate and lead meaningful action to address existing challenges and obstacles in the areas of culture, violence prevention, health and wellness, justice, and human security, that impact Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. In 2023, 11 individuals were appointed to the Reconciliation Council. There are six Indigenous women leaders and five Government of Newfoundland and Labrador representatives.

	The three Co-Chairs include two Indigenous elders and one government representative. Throughout the reporting period, the Office of Women and Gender Equality engaged in the following activities to help prevent violence in Indigenous communities: Work to establish the Reconciliation Council, included appointing members and Co-Chairs, holding three meetings (in-person: June 28, 2023, in St. John's, and September 26/27, 2023, in Corner Brook) and virtual: February 21, 2024), working on fundamental documents and processes, as well as building relationships. The Indigenous Violence Prevention Grants Program provided \$303,407 to support 15 projects to help prevent violence against Indigenous women, children and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals in Indigenous communities in the province. Worked collaboratively with Federal-Provincial and Territorial (FPT) colleagues to advance work in response to the Calls for Justice outlined in the National Inquiry's final report on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, including the Minister's virtual participation in the MMIWG Federal-Provincial-Territorial Roundtable on February 7 and 8, 2024.
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	Funding was provided to support the 18th annual Provincial Indigenous Women's Gathering held on November 27-28, 2023, in Cormack. The Gathering brought together Indigenous women from throughout the province to share their past experiences, current realities, future aspirations, and to identify measures necessary to aid in the improvement of the quality of life of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals in their communities. The 2023-24 Gathering focused on the work of the Reconciliation Council, ethical consultation and research, and traditional ceremony. In 2023-24, government awarded over 30 organizations throughout the province with approximately \$2.6 million in funding under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, including: \$45,000 to First Light St. John's Friendship Centre to address gender-based violence root causes in urban indigenous contexts; Over \$600,000 awarded to Indigenous Governments and Organizations to support grassroots opportunities to respond to and prevent gender-based violence; and, \$100,000 awarded to the Indigenous Women's Reconciliation Council via the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network to support an Indigenous technical lead position.
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Worked with community stakeholders to enhance and support the sustainability of violence prevention crisis hotline services for victims of violence throughout the province.	In August 2023, bilateral negotiations resulted in \$700,000 (2023-24: \$280,000; 2024-25: \$245,000; 2025-26: \$175,000) in Federal funding to support crisis hotlines in Newfoundland and Labrador (i.e., the 24 Hour Support and Information Line operated by End Sexual Violence NL and the Domestic Violence Help Line operated by the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador) to offer more robust services, resources and supports to serve the urgent needs of those experiencing sexual and gender-based violence.
Explored opportunities for regional coordination and community leadership in the gender-based violence sector.	During the reporting period, the Office of Women and Gender Equality worked closely with Federal, Provincial and Territorial colleagues on the development of a National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence. The plan consists of five pillars that identify existing challenges and opportunities for action where governments can advance work. Engagement sessions on Pillar 1: Support for victims, survivors, and their families; Pillar 2: Prevention; Pillar 3: Responsive justice system; Pillar 4: Implementing Indigenous-led approaches; and Pillar 5: Social infrastructure and enabling environment, were held at the end of this fiscal reporting cycle to identify opportunities for action for the provincial Implementation Plan. Bilateral negotiations with Women and Gender Equality Canada also took place in 2023-24 with \$13.6 million in Federal

	funding announced on December 15, 2023, to support the implementation of the National Action Plan provincially over four years. During the negotiation and bilateral agreement process, an Implementation Plan, Data Plan and Results Framework were created to help increase the leadership, accountability, and oversight of the gender-based violence sector, including strengthening leadership capacity and developing comprehensive data collection reflective of the realities of gender-based violence in this province. In 2023-24, funding under the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence, also included: • Over \$250,000 to the Public Legal Information Association of NL for its Journey Project to increase access to trauma-informed legal support for survivors in marginalized populations, and provide training on trauma-informed practice to legal stakeholders; • Over \$1.1 million to Status of Women councils and Violence Prevention organizations to enhance outreach, public education, and counselling activities; and, \$200,000 to Quadrangle NL to coordinate gender-based violence prevention initiatives for the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.
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2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have reported and monitored the provincial gender-based violence action plan.

2024-25 Indicators

- Responded to gender-based violence issues and needs on a regional and provincial level, through the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.
- Effectively reported to Women and Gender Equality Canada for the first-year reporting cycle for the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.
- Set a baseline monitoring threshold for data collection and reporting for the National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence.

Issue #3 – Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

In February 2019, the Provincial Government committed to an ‘all of government’ approach to GBA+. This commitment was further strengthened in September 2020, when all departmental Ministers’ Mandate Letters noted a required GBA+ analysis on all policies approach. GBA+ is an analytical process that guides the systematic consideration of sex, gender, and other intersecting identity factors to ensure the development of effective, equitable, and inclusive policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets. GBA+ aims to achieve equity, rather than equal treatment, through the examination of disaggregated data, as well as social, economic, and cultural conditions.

It is essential that GBA+ be applied consistently at every step of the policy, program, service, legislation, and budget development cycle, to ensure gender issues are addressed and that differing population needs are taken into consideration. Essentially, GBA+ helps to mitigate potential negative impacts on diverse individuals with various backgrounds and abilities by considering the outcomes for all, at the very earliest stages of policy, program, and service development.

While the Office of Women and Gender Equality has delivered substantive training to Provincial Government departments and agencies since 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily slowed GBA+ government-wide training, with the Office of Women and Gender Equality exploring innovative approaches that extend beyond in-person training sessions. For example, the Office is working with the Public Service Commission’s Centre

for Learning and Development to develop online training modules specific to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Goal

By March 31, 2026, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have strengthened the capacity of departments and agencies to fully understand, apply and integrate GBA+ into all departmental accountability mechanisms.

2023-24 Objective

By March 31, 2024, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have expanded GBA+ training to all government departments, as well as agencies, boards, and commissions.

2023-24 Work Accomplished

The following chart highlights the successful work accomplished by the Office of Women and Gender Equality around GBA+ for the 2023-24 reporting cycle.

Indicators	Results (2023-24)
Offered additional GBA+ training opportunities for public service employees through in-person, virtual and online training sessions.	Through collaboration with the Public Service Commission's Centre for Learning and Development (CLD), GBA+ training is now available to all public service employees through the PSAccess learning platform.
Broadened the awareness, understanding and intersectional application of GBA+ among all levels of Public Service employees to ensure the needs of diverse populations in Newfoundland and Labrador are met.	The Office of Women and Gender Equality hosts regular GBA+ training sessions for public service employees. Twice monthly training sessions began in March 2023, and will continue throughout 2024. Since spring 2023, some 25 training sessions have been held. In 2023-24, 500 people were trained, for a total of 1,250 since 2019.

	The Office of Women and Gender Equality continues to investigate ways to expand training throughout the public service, as well as making the training more accessible for agencies, boards, commissions, and other organizations within the province. A list of organizations that have recently completed training through the Office include: ○ NL Health Services Procurement ○ Auditor General's Office ○ Municipalities NL ○ The North Atlantic HR Department ○ The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's Public Complaints Commission
Evaluated the efficacy of GBA+ training and identified alternative GBA+ training delivery mechanisms.	The Office of Women and Gender Equality is collaborating with the Centre for Learning and Development to create an online training module on GBA+, to include with mandatory training for onboarding new public servants. The Office of Women and Gender Equality also provides in-person and virtual GBA+ training sessions to departments and teams when requested.
Worked to ensure that Provincial Government GBA+ analysis framework extends beyond gender to encompass intersectional analysis and diverse characteristics.	The Office of Women and Gender Equality is part of a Federal/Provincial/Territorial working group that is tasked with reforming GBA+ to better focus on intersecting identities.

2024-25 Objective

By March 31, 2025, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have enhanced GBA + training to better meet the needs of government departments, agencies, boards, and commissions.

2024-25 Indicators

- In conjunction with the Centre for Learning and Development, the Office of Women and Gender Equality will have launched GBA+ online training on PSAccess.
- The Office of Women and Gender Equality continued to evaluate the GBA+ training presentation to ensure it reflects the most up-to-date approaches.

Opportunities and Challenges

Far too often, women and gender-diverse individuals experience systemic challenges that require long-term systemic solutions. This is especially true when coupled with intersecting identity factors such as socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Barriers grounded in stereotypes, discrimination, organizational culture, and a lack of support at institutional and individual levels, can impact all areas of life.

To achieve true gender equity, it is vital for the Provincial Government to continue to work collectively and collaboratively with community and Indigenous and organizational partners to address societal, cultural, and institutional barriers, with targeted solutions for inclusion. The advancement and inclusion of women and gender-diverse individuals is crucial to ensuring the future success of our province.

The ability to design and implement the systemic interdisciplinary measures necessary to address the root causes of historical inequalities and improve the status and well-being of women and gender-diverse individuals in our province is achievable.

Financial Information

Office of the Executive Council - Women and Gender Equality	Original (\$)	Actual (\$)
Minister's Office		
Salaries	211,400	195,537
Transportation and Communications	41,900	21,409
Supplies	2,500	422
Purchased Services	1,800	150
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	500	0
Total: Minister's Office	258,100	217,518

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WGE		
Salaries	1,050,900	916,726
Employee Benefits	0	20,000
Transportation and Communications	60,800	49,843
Supplies	4,700	10,685
Professional Services	245,000	256,427
Purchased Services	362,000	245,322
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	1,000	2,003
Grants and Subsidies	3,322,600	5,683,453
Revenue	(280,000)	(2,882,000)
Total: WGE	4,767,000	4,302,459
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PACSW)		
Grants and Subsidies	443,600	443,600
Total: PACSW	443,600	443,600
TOTAL: WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY		
	5,468,700	4,963,577

*This financial information is unaudited.

Expenditure and revenue figures included in this document are based on public information provided in the Report on the Program Expenditures and Revenues of the Consolidated Revenue Fund for Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2024. Audited financial statements are a requirement at the Provincial Government level and are made public through the Public Accounts process. The Office of Women and Gender Equality is not required to provide a separate financial statement.

