

Office of Women and Gender Equality

Business Plan

2021-23



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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

As Minister responsible for the **Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE)**, I am pleased to present a refreshed Business Plan for the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023. This Plan, in response to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's restructuring in April 2021, marks an expanded mandate and refreshed vision for the Office of Women and Gender Equality.

Advancing the social, economic, cultural, legal, and political status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador is a top priority for our Provincial Government. The WGE 2021-23 Business Plan outlines how we will continue to work in collaboration with Provincial Government partner departments and agencies, community stakeholders, and Indigenous groups and organizations to achieve these outcomes. This work requires continued meaningful engagement with a diversity of partners and collaborators. I believe this is key towards advancing the status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in our province.

Through consistent government-wide application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), WGE works to ensure that diverse perspectives of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals help inform the development of government policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets. WGE is dedicated to preventing violence against at-risk populations, and finding targeted, action-focused solutions towards gender-based violence.

This Plan is submitted in accordance with the Transparency and Accountability Act provisions for a Category Two entity. As Minister, I am accountable for the preparation of this plan, and the achievement of the specific goals and objectives contained herein.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Parsons', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Pam Parsons

Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality

Overview

April 15, 2021, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador underwent a restructuring process. Relevant changes such as entity name change, expanded mandate, and refreshed vision have resulted in the need to re-visit the Office for the Status of Women's 2020-23 Business Plan and create a new two-year plan (2021-23) reflective of these changes for the remainder of the planning cycle.

The Office of Women and Gender Equality (WGE), formerly known as the Office for the Status of Women, provides specific resources within the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador structure to advance equity for women and gender diverse individuals. WGE is a central agency that supports the development of programs, policies, services, legislation, and budgets to advance the social, economic, cultural, legal, and political status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in the province. WGE is housed within Executive Council and staff report to the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality. In 2021-22, the WGE had a core staff complement comprised of eight permanent and two temporary positions.

Further information about WGE can be found at: <https://www.gov.nl.ca/exec/wge/>.

Mandate

WGE supports an "all of government" approach to the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets. WGE supports the work of community partners to achieve our common goal - advancing the social, economic, cultural, legal, and political status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in our province.

WGE collaborates and works with women's equity-seeking organizations, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, and Indigenous groups and organizations to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador is a safe, accessible and inclusive place for all.

Within this mandate, WGE is responsible for the **Status of Women Advisory Council Act**.

Budget

WGE is located in St. John's on the fourth floor of the Confederation Building, West Block. For 2021-22, WGE had a total budget of \$5.18 million, inclusive of the Minister's Office and the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Lines of Business

WGE staff are responsible for the following lines of business:

Policy Analysis and Advisory Services

WGE defines policy as any action taken by government. WGE supports an "all of government" approach to the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets. Through the application of GBA+, WGE provides advice to Provincial Government departments and agencies on how gender equity can best be achieved – highlighting gaps and potential detrimental impacts of policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets on women, girls, and gender diverse individuals helps move us collectively one step closer to achieving gender equity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Information Collection and Communication Services

WGE is responsible for collecting relevant information from a variety of sources to provide evidence-based policy advice. To meet this responsibility, WGE may perform jurisdictional scans, secondary research, content analysis and quantitative analysis to identify systemic inequities, gaps in information, and assess the overall social, economic, cultural, legal, and political status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in our province. As part of the information collection process, WGE consults regularly with women and equity-seeking organizations to identify ongoing and emerging issues of special concern, as well as potential solutions.

Violence Prevention

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains prevalent in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power, and harmful social norms. GBV is pervasive and its persistence continues to impact social, economic, cultural, legal, and political systems in our province. WGE is committed to the prevention of GBV in Newfoundland and Labrador. In order to achieve this goal, WGE works collaboratively with violence prevention organizations, community-based stakeholders, Indigenous groups and organizations, as well as Provincial Government departments and agencies to ensure grassroots knowledge is utilized to identify long-term systemic solutions to the prevention of GBV in our province. Implementing long-term systemic solutions to address the varying types of inequality that exist within our society is essential to creating an environment where individuals live free from the threat of violence and have an opportunity to reach their full potential.

Grants Program

Subject to approved criteria, WGE provides non-repayable grants to equity-seeking organizations for activities and initiatives that seek to advance the status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Working Within Government

Many Provincial Government departments and agencies share responsibility for issues of special concern to women and gender diverse individuals. WGE works with such departments and agencies to assist in the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus on policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets in order to help advance the status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in our province.

WGE acts as a catalyst within government, heightening awareness and initiating change where needed. WGE sits on cross-departmental committees such as the Atlantic Domestic Homicide Review Network, Health in All Policies Committee, Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities Committee, Gender-Based Needs Working Group, and Indigenous Health Working Group.

Acting as Federal-Provincial Liaison

The staff of WGE maintains a close working relationship with federal, provincial and territorial counterparts and acts as a Federal-Provincial Liaison. This includes ongoing participation in intergovernmental working groups that address such issues as Women's Economic Participation and Prosperity, Leadership and Democratic Participation, Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice, Gender-Based Analysis Plus, Intergovernmental Strategic Planning, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Working with the Community

WGE carries out ongoing engagement with women's groups and equity-seeking organizations. WGE collaborates with and consults women and gender diverse individuals with intersectional perspectives in order to identify the issues of particular concern to them, and to ensure their views are considered in the design of government strategies to enhance their economic and social status. Business, labour, and community groups are consulted to ensure that the concerns of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals are considered at every level of decision-making.

Primary Clients

WGE works collaboratively with many stakeholder organizations throughout the province to advance the status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals. In 2021-22, WGE provided grants and core operational funding of approximately \$3.2 million to key partners including: the Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women; Status of Women Councils; Violence Prevention NL organizations; Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador; Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network; Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre; 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).

WGE works collaboratively with federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women on initiatives to advance the status of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador and throughout the country.

Vision

The Vision of the Office of Women and Gender Equality is true social, legal, cultural and economic equality for women, girls, and gender diverse individuals in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Strategic Issues

Strategic Issue 1 – Economic and Social Security

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes the economic and social inequities that **women, girls, and gender diverse individuals** face within our province. Gender equity and well-being is determined by various external factors including: health, housing, food security, safety, cultural and political participation, race, ability, education, employment, income and social relationships and supports. Women and gender diverse individuals remain underrepresented in leadership roles in Newfoundland and Labrador, which means the province is missing valuable insights, talents, and expertise, rooted in the knowledge and experience specific to women and gender diverse individuals. Identifying and addressing economic and social barriers to the advancement of women and gender diverse individuals is an essential first step to increasing labour market participation and social engagement.

It is important to focus on policies and programs that affect the social and economic security of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals. One key area of focus is the division of labour within paid and unpaid work, which has resulted in a persistent wage gap, undermined contributions to leadership, and highlights persistent systemic barriers to accessing economic independence. In 2018, women in Newfoundland and Labrador made up 49.0 percent of the total workforce and had an average annual income of \$27,870. This amounts to 68.5 per cent of men's average income of \$40,700.¹ This wage gap exists between men and women because women are more likely to work part-time at lower paying jobs due to other responsibilities. Women are more likely to work minimum wage jobs. Men in the resource development sector dominate high-

¹ Statistics Canada, Table 11-10-0008-01

paying jobs and there is a systemic discrepancy in pay between men and women doing the same job.

Goal

By March 31, 2023, WGE will have continued to strengthen an “all of government” approach to address systemic barriers faced by women and gender diverse individuals that impact economic and social security.

Goal Indicators

- Engaged meaningfully across government regarding the economic and social issues affecting women, girls, and gender diverse individuals.
- Attended relevant interdepartmental committee meetings to ensure that potential impacts of policies and/or programs on gender equity are considered and implemented.
- Continued engagement with community stakeholders to address issues such as socio-economic security and the advancement of women and gender diverse individuals in leadership roles.

Objective 2021-2022

By March 31, 2022, WGE will have worked closely with government departments to support women, girls, and gender diverse individuals achieve their goals, leverage their collective voices, and reach their full potential.

Indicators

- Supported an "all of government" approach to the application of Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation, and budgets.

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- Co-chaired the Premier's Roundtable on Gender Equity.
- Undertook initiatives to encourage, promote, support, and retain women and gender diverse individuals in leadership roles including running for elected office.
- Worked closely with the Department of Health and Community Services and stakeholders to begin to equitably increase access to fertility treatments in the province.
- Worked collaboratively with partner departments and proponents to negotiate new Women's Employment Plans and Gender Equity and Diversity Plans.

Objective 2022-2023

By March 31, 2023, through various initiatives, WGE will have further strengthened our community collaborations in advancing Provincial Government commitments to supporting women, girls, and gender diverse individuals achieve their full potential.

Strategic Issue 2 – Violence Prevention

Violence Prevention is a core commitment of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and reflects the urgency in addressing systemic violence in this province. Addressing and preventing violence requires a multi-departmental, government-community partnership to find long-term targeted solutions to the problem of violence against those most at risk in our society – women, children, seniors, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable people who are victims of violence because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or economic status. Violence has a pervasive impact on social, economic, cultural, legal, and political status of individuals in our society. Violence destroys relationships and community supports, and has devastating long-term impacts on survivors, families, and communities. As such, the Provincial Government continues to respond with measures that target violence on all fronts. WGE works collaboratively with violence prevention organizations and Indigenous groups and organizations throughout the province, as well as government departments and agencies, to ensure grass-roots knowledge is utilized to inform policies, programs, legislation, and front-line services for survivors of violence. Implementing long-term systemic solutions to address the varying types of inequality that exist within our society is essential to creating an environment where women, girls, and gender diverse individuals live free from the threat of violence and have an opportunity to reach their full potential.

Goal

By March 31, 2023, WGE will have worked with community partners and government departments and agencies to develop an intersectional, research-based, and culturally-sensitive approach to violence prevention.

Goal Indicators

- Worked collaboratively with the Department of Justice and Public Safety and the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation to advance

necessary work in response to the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQA+ individuals.

- Collaborated with Indigenous women, governments, and organizations to improve the social and economic well-being of Indigenous women and girls, specifically in the areas of violence against women, girls, and gender diverse individuals and mental health.
- Collaborated with the 2SLGBTQQA+ community to help make Newfoundland and Labrador a safe, accessible and inclusive place for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Actively participated in Federal, Provincial and Territorial Task Teams to address violence, including the federal government's Women and Gender Equality's Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice and Human Trafficking Task Team.

Objective 2021-2022

By March 31, 2022, WGE will have supported Provincial Government departments and agencies identify and implement changes to policies, programs, services, and legislation with the goal of preventing gender-based violence in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Indicators

- Collaborated with community stakeholders and Indigenous groups and organizations in meaningful engagement activities aimed at helping prevent violence in Indigenous communities.
- Collaborated with Federal-Provincial-Territorial colleagues to identify evidence-based violence prevention best practices and effective strategies.

Objective 2022-2023

By March 31, 2023, WGE will have worked with community partners, Indigenous groups and organizations, and government departments and agencies to develop an intersectional, research-based, and culturally-sensitive approach to violence prevention.

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

Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives, legislation and budgets. The “plus” in GBA+ is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders). We all have multiple characteristics to our identities that intersect and contribute to who we are. GBA+ considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives.

In February 2019, the Provincial Government committed to an “all of government” approach to GBA+ and this commitment was further highlighted in September 2020, in all departmental Ministers’ mandate letters noting a required GBA+ on all policies approach. As a primary line of business for WGE, ensuring the proper training and implementation of GBA+, and the efficiency and use of this analytical tool, is a main priority. From April 2019-January 2020, WGE trained 513 participants, including policy staff and executive in the majority of government departments including the Premier’s Office, Cabinet Secretariat and Finance. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government-wide training strategy will require an innovative approach that works beyond in-person sessions to ensure a broad reach to Government of Newfoundland and Labrador employees.

Goal

By March 31, 2023, WGE will have strengthened the capacity of departments and agencies to fully understand and apply Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to policies, programs, services, legislation and budgets in order to ensure equitable outcomes for women, girls, and gender diverse populations.

Goal Indicators

- Offered GBA+ training to government departments and agencies.
- Enhanced GBA+ training opportunities through in-person, virtual, and online training options.
- Evaluated efficacy of training and application of GBA+.

Objective 2021-2022

By March 31, 2022, WGE will have continued the development, enhancement and delivery of GBA+ training across government departments.

Indicator

- Established baseline evaluation mechanisms for future evaluation of GBA+ training.
- Developed guidelines and feedback mechanisms for policy analysis.

Objective 2022-2023

By March 31, 2023, WGE will have expanded GBA+ training to all government departments, as well as agencies, boards and commissions.

Annex A: Strategic Directions

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has identified the following strategic directions for the 2021-2023 planning cycle. This plan was prepared in consideration of the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 1: A Better Economy

Strategic Direction 2: Healthier People

Strategic Direction 3: Better Living

Strategic Direction 4: A Bright Future

Strategic Direction 5: A More Efficient Public Sector



Newfoundland
&
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