



# ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

ISBN 978-1-55471-183-3

## *Chairperson's Message*

It is truly hard to believe that it's time again to present the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women's Annual Report. As always I am amazed by the amount of work and activities that the Council embraced but most importantly, how we stayed focused on our main objectives. With the adoption of our 18-month action plan, the Council has set strategic goals, i.e.: Equality Issues, Awareness, Participation in decision-making, Organizational Development and Mobilization.

The ACSW continues to strive to reach women in our province in order to improve the general awareness of women's issues in N.B. We have found that our Lunch and Learn series has been a very effective vehicle that allows us to meet women in their communities and share with them the work that is done by the Council. More importantly, it allows us an opportunity to learn from them. They can tell us what issues are important to them. Those discussions allow us to better understand and evaluate the priorities of New Brunswick Women. 2007-08 has been a very busy calendar year for Lunch and Learns with over 40 sessions held across the province covering a host of topics from workplace bullying to Aboriginal Women's issues. Every attempt will be made to continue going out in the communities as the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Another effective tool to reach women has been our e-mail newsletter. N.B. Women's News has 3000 subscribers. It is a great communication tool for all women and we hope to continue to increase its membership.

Finally the best asset that Council has would be its members and staff. Having members represent different parts of the province allows the Council to gain a clearer picture of the realities/challenges that women

face in both rural and urban New Brunswick. The Council is better able to set its priorities by the feedback received by the members as they are our eyes and ears within the communities.

I continue to be amazed by the dedication and hard work of our members and I want to thank you for your continued support and contributions.

I also must underline the hard work and dedication of our staff. We may have a small staff but I must say they are "mighty" and get the job done! Rosella, Wendy, Jenna and Lauren, you are a wonderful group of people who have helped me along the way and in turn helped create a very efficient organization. To each of you, my sincere thank you for being so committed.

To staff and members both, you are more than talented, you are very caring and believe in the issues at hand and that is probably the most powerful element for the Council. That element through the years has been instrumental in overcoming many challenges and obstacles. The caring and concern actually shows throughout the work that is done.

Our work is not always popular but needs to be done in order to accomplish the goals, that being, "equality for all"!

I continue to be very proud of what we've accomplished and very grateful for the experience that I have had to work with such a great group of women!

Ginette Petitpas-Taylor

Chairperson

March 31, 2008

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## WHO WE ARE

The members of the Advisory Council in 2007-2008 are:  
Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, Moncton, Chairperson, appointed March 2005  
Odette Richard, Westmorland Kent, appointed June 2004, (Vice-Chairperson March 2005)  
Beatrice Long, Madawaska/Victoria, appointed November 2007  
Elizabeth Matheson, Miramichi, appointed November 2007  
Dale Marie LeBlanc, Moncton, appointed November 2007  
Diana J. Alexander, Greater Saint John, November 2007  
Karla Dawn Reynolds, Kings/Albert, appointed April 2006  
Dorothy Hamilton, Restigouche, appointed April 2006  
Brenda Murphy, Greater Saint John, replaced in November 2007  
Jackie Matthews, Charlotte, re-appointed November 2007  
C. Anne Cummings, Carleton, appointed March 2002  
Christine Augustine, Miramichi, replaced in November 2007

## WHAT WE DO

The Advisory Council was created by provincial legislation to advise the Minister on issues of concern to women and to bring these issues before the public and the government. The Mission of the Advisory Council is to promote equity for women in all sectors of New Brunswick society. The Council studies issues and adopts recommendations for action. On matters of interest to women, the Council:

- advises governments
- recommends laws, policies and practices to the N.B. government
- facilitates networking amongst women's groups
- gathers, researches and disseminates information
- increases awareness on issues, programs and services.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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## COUNCIL MEETINGS

The members of the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women held 3 meetings in 2007-08, each in a different part of the province. In addition, an email working/exchange session was held to adopt recommendations as well as a special teach-in for members on the topic of the HPV Vaccine with N.B.'s Chief Medical Officer. An orientation session for new members was held in December 2007.

Quarterly meetings include a public session as well as board development activities. Members report on their activities and on the concerns of women in their region. Decisions are made on priorities and positions.

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### June 14-15, 2007, Fredericton, N.B.

**Right to Information / Protection of Information** - The Advisory Council discussed and approved issues to be submitted to two task forces looking into the right to information and a new law for protection of personal and health information.

**Post-Secondary Education** - The Advisory Council discussed its brief to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in N.B. and accepted a draft version with the understanding that additional final recommendations would be adopted in an email work session to be organized. Additional information was requested about the vastly different realities hindering post-secondary entry and completion for Aboriginal people. The Council noted that the Commission's discussion paper makes little mention of women or diversity. Members agreed on importance of recommendations targeting financial obstacles, including tuition fee caps and measures to reduce student debt.

**Statistics on Violence** - The Advisory Council was informed that, following meetings to discuss the provincial government's decision to no longer publish the report that provided statistics on woman abuse in N.B., the government has now decided to create a new process that will provide these statistics.

**Sex trade in New Brunswick** - The Advisory Council discussed a recently released report on the sex trade in N.B. prepared for the Women's Issues Branch by St Thomas University professor John Coates and researcher Stacey Lee. It was agreed that Council would develop a position statement on the issue.

**Child Care Consultations** - The Advisory Council also partnered with the N.B. Child Care Coalition who received funding to conduct public consultations in June in Campbellton, Caraquet and Miramichi.

The Council's 2003 brief will be the basis for its submission to the upcoming provincial consultations, focussing on the guiding principles for a good child care system.

**Workplace Bullying** - It was agreed that the Advisory Council position paper on workplace bullying, recently submitted to provincial and federal departments, would form part of the Council submission to the upcoming Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission.

Advisory Council members discussed a variety of actions taken or planned: The provincial government has announced that it will proceed with implementing a couple of longstanding recommendations of the Advisory Council, domestic violence death reviews and integration of midwives into the public health system. Due to the federal government's restrictions on the activities of funded women's groups, N.B.'s Coalition of Transition Houses is disappearing and the Advisory Council decided to urge the provincial government to follow the lead of many other provinces that provide funding to transition house associations. The Council Chairperson reported on efforts, including a meeting with the Justice minister/Attorney General, to obtain access zone protection around the abortion clinic and the offices and residences of health professionals providing such services.

Among the issues raised by members in their reports: the plight of low-wage women who are not eligible for benefits provided to social assistance recipients.

**Supper meeting with the Minister** - Council members prepared to meet with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, Carmel Robichaud.

**June 15, 2007** - Public Lunch & Learn, Women and Eating Disorders. About 100 women and a few men joined the Advisory Council members for a lunch-time public viewing of a documentary by Atlantic Mediaworks, *Through True Eyes: The Process of Recovery from Eating Disorders*, and discussion with the film producer, a woman interviewed in the film, and a representative of N.B. Eating Disorders Council.

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### October 11-12, 2007, Caraquet, N.B.

**Firearms and Animal Abuse In Domestic Violence Situations in Rural N.B. Communities** - The Advisory Council members met with the report's authors Dr. Deborah Doherty and Dr. Jennie Hornosty to discuss policy changes suggested by their study. The researchers will complete and prioritize needed changes and provide it to the Council.

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## COUNCIL MEETINGS (continued...)

**Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation System** - The Advisory Council members discussed and adopted draft comments to the Independent Review Panel of the N.B. Workplace, Health, Safety and Compensation System, with a focus on gender-based analysis of occupational health and safety, workplace bullying and workers' compensation coverage issues.

**Commission on Post-Secondary Education in N.B.** - The Advisory Council members discussed the recent Commission report including the recommendation in favour of performance-based contracts with post-secondary institutions to increase the number of students from under-represented groups such as First Nations and women. Members gave direction for the Council's response, including the need for gender-based analysis in any restructuring and the importance of student loans/grants, information, child care in women's access to post secondary education.

**2008 Report Card on the Status of N.B. Women** - Advisory Council members discussed the data-gathering process and the statistics to be included in the 2008 Report Card on the Status of N.B. Women. Not all provincial government data is available broken by sex plus there are sometimes confidentiality issues linked to New Brunswick's small population.

**ACSW Appointments** - ACSW members noted that delays in vacancies being filled on the Council limit its efforts to serve the population throughout the province - the lack of Council representation in the northern regions is particularly regrettable - and may create difficulties in securing a quorum for quarterly meetings. Council decided to reiterate its support for the introduction of a transparent process along with criteria for appointments to all government boards, and in our case, professional or personal interest and experience with women's issues.

**October 11, 2007** - Public Lunch & Learn, Experiences of Abused Rural Women in N.B. and P.E.I. Firearms, Animal Abuse, Culture, with Dr. Deborah Doherty and Dr. Jennie Hornosty, Co-Principal Researchers, Family Violence on the Farm and in Rural Communities research team, UNB. About 35 women and men - including many

professionals in mental health, public health and public safety from across the Chaleur and Acadian Peninsula regions - joined Advisory Council members for this public presentation.

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### March 27-28, 2008, Saint John, N.B.

**Workplan of the ACSW** - In anticipation of a session at the next quarterly meeting for the development of a new workplan, Council members discussed their shared understanding of the Council's "Mission 1" and how to become more strategic in its goal setting and actions.

**2008 Report Card on the Status of Women** - Advisory Council members discussed the challenges involved in preparing the Council's Report Card and underlined the importance of making the provincial government accountable for the quality and availability of statistics and for efforts to address the problems highlighted by the data.

**Partners Building Futures** - The Advisory Council has been represented on this federal provincial pilot project designed to get women on social assistance into non-traditional jobs. Due to concerns that more resources and preparation are needed to ensure the success of this vulnerable group, and concern about the project's meeting of its objectives, the Council decided to withdraw from participation in the Partners Building Futures program advisory committee.

**Prostitution** - Julie Dingwell, Co-chair of the Saint John Sex Trade Action Committee and Executive Director of AIDS/SIDA Saint John, shared her knowledge on the issues surrounding sex trade.

Among the issues raised by members in their reports: the need to encourage anti-poverty and women's groups to indicate timely support for legal aid reform.

**March 28, 2008** - Public Lunch & Learn, Are We There Yet? Summary of the 2008 Report Card on the Status of N.B. Women with Wendy Johnston, ACSW Policy & Liaison Officer - About 100 women, including community activists, civil servants and municipal politicians attended a presentation on the Report Card.

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## ISSUES

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Following the appointment of the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in N.B. and while it was developing its brief for submission to the Commission, the Advisory Council raised concerns with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education that the Commission discussion paper barely mentions gender and diversity concerns - only one of 30 graphs on the Commission's web site provided sex-disaggregated data - despite the significant differences in the status, situation and life experiences of women and men and of various gender groups.

The Advisory Council brief to the Commission focused on accessibility issues, noting that women's post-secondary education is shaped by persistent inequalities that result in women's higher likelihood of studying part-time and their severe under-representation in certain programs.

The Advisory Council recommended:

- That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities, in collaboration with their federal counterparts and in consultation and partnership with Aboriginal women's organizations and community groups, undertake a needs assessment and develop an action plan that includes the appropriate policies and programs to promote the full and equitable participation of Aboriginal women in post-secondary education. A system of sex-disaggregated data collection must also be developed and implemented for the purposes of tracking enrolment and completion rates and monitoring program results for Aboriginal learners.
- That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour ensure that comparable statistical information on student aid, enrolments, attrition and completion rates of women and men, and diverse groups of women and men (Aboriginal, other-abled, lone parents) in New Brunswick's community colleges and universities is collected, made available to the public and used in policy-making.
- That the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour in collaboration with educational institutions and community groups, identify the needs and concerns of women and diverse groups of women with regards to post-secondary education access and participation.
- That the provincial education, labour and social program authorities develop and implement a coordinated strategy to achieve the full and equitable participation of women in post-secondary education. The framework would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Effective recruitment initiatives to encourage and support the participation of women in engineering and applied sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, technology and skilled trades. Special outreach efforts must focus on chronically under-represented groups, such as Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.
- Increased public investment in higher education and training, including literacy programs for adult learners, with funding tied to equity goals.
- A revamped student financial aid system, with higher proportion of upfront, need-based non-repayable grants and scholarships based on actual education and living costs, along with tuition fee control measures.
- Changes to the Employment Insurance program to extend eligibility for maternity and parental benefits to student mothers and parents, with leave provisions guaranteed by post-secondary institutions.
- Creation of affordable licensed child care spaces in on-campus and off-campus centres that offer flexible scheduling to student parents.
- Enhanced support services, including mentoring programs and peer support groups, for female students in colleges, universities and apprenticeship settings, particularly those in non-traditional fields of study and training. Services provided to Aboriginal students and students with disabilities developed and based on a collaborative service and support model which partners post-secondary institutions with other agencies and groups.
- Preparation and dissemination of user-friendly information resources about learning options, existing programs and services.

Once the Commission's report was released, the Advisory Council informed the minister of its disappointment that the only mention of women was to state that we are still under-represented in certain occupational areas. The Advisory Council noted with regret that no action was recommended towards an action plan to promote the participation of Aboriginal women in post-secondary education, nor towards a coordinated strategy to achieve the full participation of women in post-secondary education, including recruitment initiatives to support women in engineering and applied sciences, technology and skilled trades and special outreach efforts for Aboriginal women and women with disabilities.

### EMPLOYMENT

**Employment Standards** - The Advisory Council reiterated its support for improved basic employment standards:

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## ISSUES (continued...)

- Employment standards protection should be extended to all workers, including live-in domestics and farm workers, independent contractors, people in work/training situations.
- The minimum wage rate should be linked to some objective standard, to bring it above the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-offs.
- There should be limits on hours of work. Unlike all other provinces, N.B. currently sets no limits on the number of hours an employee may be required to work during any daily or weekly period.
- Overtime pay should be based on the regular rate of pay, rather than the minimum wage rate. This would bring New Brunswick into line with most other Canadian jurisdictions.
- Employees should have the right to refuse overtime.
- The provincial legislation should be amended to provide paid sick leave and paid family responsibility leave.
- Eligibility to maternity/parental leave benefits should be enhanced, since many N.B. parents cannot benefit from the current program.

**Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation** - In its comments to the Independent Review Panel on the N.B. Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation System, the Advisory Council focussed on the need for gender-based analysis when designing occupational health and safety policies, on the need for measures addressing workplace bullying and on coverage issues such as cost of coverage for non-profit organizations and coverage for volunteers.

Women and men experience specific occupational health problems as the result of differing exposure to risk factors, varying social situations and certain biological differences, though women's realities are rarely considered or studied. Gender-blind practices are mirrored in documents produced by governmental bodies. The data on accidents, injuries, claims and benefits presented in the publications of the NBWHSCC, including the Client Satisfaction Survey, the Report to Stakeholders and Annual Reports, do not distinguish between the sexes.

- Most female-dominated jobs do not pay as well, are undervalued, and are clustered at lower levels in the organization. They also tend to involve working conditions likely to have adverse health impacts. Women are more often affected by occupational diseases than by workplace accidents that result in the more visible injuries and mortality that have historically been the focus of occupational health and safety intervention. Only 1% to 3% of the claims accepted by the

NBWHSCC are currently for occupational diseases, where the Panel notes the "effect of exposure is typically perceived over a period of time", versus accidents that usually produce immediately obvious harm.

The Council recommended:

- Appointments to the WHSCC Board of directors should aim for greater diversity and gender balance, with representatives from a broad range of women's employment situations, including non-unionized and non-standard employment.
- The WHSCC Board of directors should adopt a formal process of stakeholder consultations, including women's non-standard employment sectors.
- The WHSCC should adopt a policy requiring gender-based analysis of its policies and programs in order to ensure equitable protection of New Brunswick women in the area of occupational health and safety. This policy should establish a training program and accountability instruments.
- The Commission's statistics and reports should include sex-disaggregated data and gender-based analyses.
- Research should be undertaken to study the health-related effects of various working conditions common to women's jobs and the time it takes for them to manifest.
- Representative samples of women should be included in future research on occupational health and safety.
- Sexual harassment and violence should be included as occupational safety issues.
- The provincial government should amend legislation to recognize workplace bullying as a workplace health issue, provide protection and assure redress for victims, including advice to victims, complaint procedures, tough penalties for employers who tolerate it and follow-up to ensure the problem is rectified.
- The provincial government should ensure that enforcement and public education on workplace bullying are supported by adequate human and material resources.
- The provincial government should assist employers to develop workplace bullying prevention policies and codes of conduct, and to provide information and support to victims.
- As an employer, the provincial government should investigate extent of bullying in public sector and take measures to eliminate it.
- The provincial government should launch a social marketing campaign on workplace bullying, provide 1-800 number, web site, etc.
- Workers' compensation coverage should be made compulsory for all employers regardless of size of enterprise.

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## ISSUES (continued...)

- Workers' compensation coverage for volunteers should be expanded to include areas in which women are active.
- WHSCC policies, regulations and rate structures should be reviewed to ensure that non-profit organizations are treated fairly.

**Workplace Bullying** - The Advisory Council called for legislation and public education efforts to address workplace bullying - also referred to as psychological or workplace harassment, and usually defined as repeated, unreasonable behaviour that intimidates or humiliates an employee or group of employees - as a serious occupational health and safety issue.

Following its series of sessions around the province on workplace bullying, which were met with overflow crowds, requests to come to many more regions and pleas for help from individuals and occasionally whole work-sites, the Advisory Council issued a media release to make known the high level of interest in the topic and urging the government, employers and the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission to address the issue. The Council added that the provincial government, as an employer, should investigate the extent of bullying in the public sector and take measures to eliminate it. There are currently few options available for targets of workplace bullying: it is not mentioned in employment standards or occupational health and safety laws. Provincial and federal human rights do not cover it unless it is motivated by the victim's race, sex, sexual orientation or other prohibited grounds for discrimination.

### RIGHT TO PROTECTION OF INFORMATION

The Advisory Council presented some comments to the Task Force on Right to Information and Protection of Personal Information and the Personal Health Information Task Force, but noted that the short consultation period did not allow for a complete review of the issues. The Council highlighted the following issues that raise privacy concerns:

- Emergency contraception - Since emergency contraception has been available without a prescription, N.B. pharmacists have adopted a practice of asking questions, usually at the cash, and recording answers from women requesting it, relating to menstruation, use of contraception and the sexual incident at fault. The N.B. Ombudsman cannot accept complaints similar to some that have been laid in other provinces where similar practice by pharmacist was attempted, since the N.B. Ombudsman does not have a mandate over the private sector.

- Language - When service is not available in a health patient's official language, staff or patients sometimes use interpreters, including patients in the next-bed, a secretary, etc, with the result that some patients do not get all the information they are seeking, or do not ask all the questions they might if it wasn't for the privacy concerns.
- Co-ed hospital rooms - Some N.B. hospitals place women and men in the same hospital rooms, on a regular or occasional basis. This raises concerns about personal well-being, but also about privacy. Some women report they don't feel free to ask questions of attending health care staff while in mixed rooms. Victims of domestic or sexual violence can obtain a non co-ed room if they disclose their past.
- Addictions - Few addiction services in N.B. are provided in women-only groups. For many women with addiction problems, their experience of abuse and exploitation is relevant to their addiction and to their treatment. Women often resist disclosure in a mixed group. Sex workers in a recent N.B. study reported that staff at detox centres are very judgmental and that women-centred services are key to their requesting help and potentially leaving the sex trade.
- Abortion - In N.B., regulations not based on medical or health issues limit access to abortion, potentially having the effect of encouraging inaccurate information in a patient file. Women who want an abortion must give a reason, according to the current Medicare form, though this is not legally required. Concern has been expressed that inaccurate information could later be used against the patient in an insurance or other case.
- Safety - Some women who are attempting to keep a former partner from contacting them have reported that their partner was able to obtain information from a government service, for example by asking where the federal child tax credit was being sent.

### POPULATION GROWTH

The Advisory Council brief to the Population Growth Secretariat focussed on the obstacles preventing some families from having the number of children they want and the family supports needed to help reconcile the demands of paid work, education and family, in order to create an attractive environment for those who settle or to return to N.B.

The Advisory Council submitted that New Brunswick's population decline is partly due to the out-migration of young adults and to our inability to attract immigrants, but it may also be caused by our social and economic policies - our culture - that fail to adequately value and support the work of families. This can influence the decision to have a child, or to have more than one child.

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## ISSUES (continued...)

The province should adopt a comprehensive family policy and a comprehensive development plan for quality, affordable and flexible child care services.

Finally, reconciling workplace and family responsibilities is more than just an individual challenge; it is a key part of achieving economic and social well-being. Governments and employers have a role to play in making workplaces more family-friendly and in ensuring that workers have decent salaries and working conditions. The minimum workplace standards set by the provincial Employment Standards Act are the only protection most employees have. Despite some recent legislative changes, reform is still needed on matters including minimum wage rates, hours of work, various types of leaves and working arrangements. Note, for example, that the minimum wage rate is not set according to any formula, nor is it indexed to keep up with the cost of living. Employment standards provisions should be amended to better support women and men in their family responsibilities. The Advisory Council has recommended a series of changes to that effect.

### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

**Strategy** - The Advisory Council sought to bring attention to the need for a comprehensive strategy on reproductive health services, pointing to the province's high levels and wide regional variations in the rates of caesareans and hysterectomies, limited access to sexual health counselling, limited access to emergency contraception and limited access to abortion services.

**Midwifery** - The Advisory Council applauded the provincial government decision announced in May 2007 to integrate midwives in the maternity care team and urged it to expend the needed resources on recruitment and working conditions to attract enough midwives to serve all the regions of the province.

**Access to Abortion** - The Advisory Council reiterated on several occasions its longstanding position that access to publicly funded abortion should be part of a government strategy that includes public education and planned pregnancy initiatives, including making emergency contraception more available. The Advisory Council has proposed a planned pregnancy initiative on that issue. Some women are facing hardship arising from the lack of access to abortion; women with no doctor or an anti choice doctor have no access point and some physicians and other gatekeepers do not provide information or refer to anti choice centres. Most abortions in New Brunswick are now performed at the private clinic in Fredericton.

Due to heightened protest activity surrounding abortion providers and clinic, the Advisory Council joined with the National Abortion Federation and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada in calling for legislation to establish an access zone around facilities providing abortion services and residences and offices of service providers. The Council argued that, apart from the public safety reasons for a "bubble zone", women who access a legal health care service and the staff who provide it must be treated with respect for their dignity and privacy.

The Advisory Council assisted the organizers of a petition, eventually signed by 400 persons, in sending it to the Premier. The petition urged the provincial Cabinet to repeal the regulation under Medical Services Payment Act, which states that abortion will be paid for by Medicare only when approved by two doctors and performed by a specialist in a N.B. hospital. The Advisory Council also partnered with by Law Students for Choice, the University of N.B. Faculty of Law and the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada for the organization of a pro-choice public meeting, *Silent No More: Speak out for Choice*, in Fredericton attended by 300 persons.

### PAY EQUITY

In May 2007, the Advisory Council called for more rigorous criteria within the government's 5-year wage gap plan, to determine if the plan is working. The government's voluntary pay equity measures promoted with employers for a test period of 5 years were only acceptable to the Advisory Council if an independent evaluation was done of the results. The Council stated that the measure of progress in eradicating pay inequity must be better monitored: workplaces must be shown to be using unbiased job evaluations to base the pay scales of gender-dominated positions.

### ADVOCACY

The Advisory Council made several public comments about the impact on New Brunswick of the federal government's 2006 decision to limit the mandate of Status of Women Canada and to ban advocacy work by funded groups. The Council commented that groups might disappear or get caught in service delivery and not be available for consultation and prevention work. The Council highlighted the fact that groups such as Coalition of Transition Houses, Urban Core Support Network, Coalition for Pay Equity do important work in helping N.B. understand what is needed to correct problems and urged provincial government to become involved in lobbying the federal government and in providing funding for advocacy work by New Brunswick non-profit groups.

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## ISSUES (continued...)

In June 2007, the Council organized a meeting of some advocacy groups with the Task Force on the Community Non-Profit Sector, to make them aware of differences between groups that have an impact on funding, needs and relations with government, media and the public. The Advisory Council was also represented in the Task Force's closed consultation.

### CHILD CARE

The Advisory Council partnered with N.B. Child Care Coalition in the organization of public forums in Campbellton, Caraquet and Miramichi, as part of the government consultations in June 2007. The report from these sessions was submitted to the government.

The Advisory Council joined economic and social development organizations in organizing a media conference on National Children's Day 2007 to advocate for improved access to early learning and child care, in the interest, among others, of employers and the province's self sufficiency. The N.B. Child Care Coalition, Moncton Business & Professional Women's Club, Entreprise Network and the Société des Acadiens et Acadiennes du Nouveau-Brunswick joined the Advisory Council in denouncing the fact that 86% of N.B. children under age 12 do not have access to regulated child care services.

### PROTECTION OF HEALTH PATIENTS

In partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Advisory Council, and on behalf of the Coalition of Advisory Councils of Canada, the N.B. Advisory Council issued a media release on the case of Dr. James B. Hanley who was prevented from practicing in Newfoundland for having sex with a patient and who practiced in N.B. for another 15 months, even after he had entered an undertaking not to practice anywhere in Canada. The Advisory Council called for procedures and protocols to prevent physicians suspended in one province from practicing in another region. The Coalition of Advisory Councils issued the following recommendations to the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada, all Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, ministers of health and ministers responsible for the status of women:

- Enact legislation governing doctors in all provinces and territories to ensure information on all suspensions and restrictions on licenses (whether before or after final adjudication of complaints) is immediately made available to other jurisdictions.
- Enact legislation governing doctors in all provinces and territories to ensure disciplinary actions (both before and after final adjudication) can be easily adopted by another jurisdiction.

- Create and enforce requirements for members of Colleges to immediately report complaints made against them in all Colleges where they hold a license.
- Create and enforce requirements for members of Colleges to consent to the release of all information about any complaint made against them to all Colleges where they hold a license.
- Create and enforce requirements that members provide information which focus on problems with performance, conduct or competence at the time of renewal of their license with Colleges where they hold licenses.

### VIOLENCE

**Consistency and Prevention** - Many positive changes have been brought about as a result of successive provincial action plans on violence against women, but in 2007-08, the Advisory Council raised two concerns relative to these actions: services developed through the plans are not consistent throughout the province - only communities that submit proposals develop services - and there is little focus on prevention of violence.

**Domestic Death Reviews** - The Advisory Council recommends domestic death reviews after every domestic-violence-related death, conducted by independent multi-disciplinary teams to examine the history of the perpetrator, the victim and the community responses, with a view to identifying risk factors and gaps in services, communication and public knowledge, and to making recommendations to help reduce domestic violence and homicides. New Brunswick has a higher-than-average rate of spousal murder-suicides and a significant incidence of murders related to domestic violence.

**Rural Violence and Firearms Study** - Following the release of the study, *Experiences of Abused Rural Women in N.B. and P.E.I. Firearms, Animal Abuse, Culture*, by Dr. Deborah Doherty and Dr. Jennie Hornosty, Co-Principal Researchers, Family Violence on the Farm and in Rural Communities research team at University of N.B., the Advisory Council sponsored their tour of the province in a free public Lunch & Learn series and sent letters to various government departments, Crown prosecutors, N.B. Association of Social Workers and others on the problems highlighted.

### ABORIGINAL WOMEN

The Advisory Council considers it has a responsibility not only to support First Nations women working towards equality, but also to help create the conditions that will ensure that the voices of First Nations women are heard. The Council is organizing a series of mini events (workshops, Lunch & Learns) on issues of concern to aboriginal women, some aimed at non-aboriginals and some

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## ISSUES (continued...)

for aboriginal women.

The Chairperson met with minister Ed Doherty to advocate that the concerns of aboriginal women be integrated in the talks that the provincial government has launched with the First Nations. The Minister was informed that the Aboriginal women's groups consulted by the Advisory Council identified 5 areas of concern: Governance, which included the lack of core funding for Aboriginal women's organizations, the relationships between Aboriginal women and governments, and Status issues, including Bill C-31 and Matrimonial Real Property On-Reserve; language and culture; poverty and employment; health and wellness and family violence and related social issues.

The Council is represented on the advisory committee on violence against aboriginal women formed by the Minister responsible for the status of women and participated in a provincial conference organized by the Committee for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women.

### CORRECTIONS

The Advisory Council reiterated in meetings its long-standing concern that women in prison in N.B. do not get access to the same programs as men, and do not get access to the programs they need, such as addictions treatment programs, parenting programs to help maintain healthy parent-child relationships while incarcerated and specific supports and programming for Aboriginal women.

### POVERTY

**Strategy** - The Advisory Council advocated and assisted a coalition of groups in support of a provincial anti-poverty strategy.

**Economic Unit** - The Advisory Council reiterated its recommendation to abolish the definition of economic unit used for eligibility to social assistance and denouncing the fact that the current policy invents relationships of financial interdependence and legal obligation where none exist. Under other government programs and laws, eligibility is determined based on the applicant's married or common-law relationship, when relevant. But in the case of social assistance, aid is refused, reduced or cancelled when New Brunswickers share accommodation with relatives, friends, or roommates. The Council recommends that the definition of the economic unit used to determine social assistance eligibility correspond to the definition of financial support obligations of legally married or common-law couples as set out in other laws for other New Brunswickers.

### LEGAL AID

In June 2007, the Advisory Council advised the provincial government that the current situation in regards to legal aid should be remedied by the following actions:

- coverage provided by legal aid should be extended to include more family law cases (such as support and custody issues) and poverty law issues. Innovative service options be introduced, such as community clinics, early intervention, referral to counselling, mental health assessment, employment counselling; a financial test based on the poverty line be considered, and innovative financial options be developed, such as payment of a reasonable contribution to the legal aid cost, with the goal of making legal aid services accessible to persons who have income above the poverty line but for whom hiring a lawyer would represent a financial hardship.
- while priority should still be given to persons who are victims of violence, that civil legal aid services be provided to other groups in need;
- resource persons and interveners who work with women in the community be consulted when developing and implementing new service options;
- additional human resources be allotted and that training be provided on the multidimensional aspects of women's problems, particularly women in violent situations.
- the coordination of services, the monitoring of case progress and the evaluation and monitoring of the quality of services be part of the administration of civil legal aid, and that statistics on requests approved, the reasons for refusal and the needs of clients be kept.

### REPORT CARD ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Advisory Council publishes the Report Card every two years to provide the public and decision makers with a handy reference to information on the status of New Brunswick women. The Report Card is the most frequently consulted document on the Council website. In 2008, the Advisory Council concluded that while the status of women is improving in some important areas, there are other important areas where the lack of progress is stunning and where the lack of concern for the lack of progress is unconscionable. One such area - the number of women in elected positions - is important partly because it could enable change in other issues.

The Advisory Council also deplored the fact that some statistics are not available, or not available broken by sex and that little is available on Aboriginal women, for example.

Highlights from the 2008 Report Card on the Status of Women in N.B. released in February 2008:

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## ISSUES (continued...)

- The provincial government no longer compiles and publishes statistics on woman abuse incidents and court outcomes. In April 2007, the Advisory Council had protested the government decision to discontinue publication of the Family Violence Criminal Justice Statistical Report, but the decision was maintained and so, some crucial statistics were not available for inclusion in the 2008 Report Card, such as:
  - Number of woman abuse incidents cleared by charge,
  - Number of accused appearing in court,
  - Number of offenders sentenced,
  - Number given jail time, conditional sentence, probation or fines,
  - Average length of jail term.
- New Brunswick has higher rates than the Canadian average for spousal homicide-suicides and for sexual assault offenders given conditional sentences.
- New Brunswick has a lower rate of sexual assault reports that result in charges than the Canadian average. However almost twice as many of the charges laid in New Brunswick result in convictions than the Canadian average.
- New Brunswick has high rates of caesareans and hysterectomies, more lone mothers living in poverty and more births to teenage girls, than the Canadian average.
- New Brunswick has a low ratio of regulated child care spaces to children aged 12 and under even though more New Brunswick women with preschoolers are in the labour force than the Canadian average.
- Fewer judges in New Brunswick are women, provincially and federally appointed, than the average for Canada.
- Fewer senior women in N.B. live with income below the poverty line than the Canadian average. Though only 4% of N.B. senior women live in poverty, the total income of senior women is significantly lower than senior men's - 37% lower in 2005, worse than in 1985 when it was 25% lower.

The provincial rate of child poverty is lower than Canada's. 10% of all females and 9% of all males in the province had income below Statistics Canada after-tax low-income cut-offs. Almost four in ten female lone-parent families in the province live with income below the poverty line.
- N.B. women earned about 87% of what men did, a pay gap of 13%, while Canadian women had a pay gap of 16%, relative to men. N.B. women earned on average \$15.80 per hour, and men, \$18.07.
- Only 28% of the 1,554 provincial government-appointed members of boards and commissions were women, less than in 2005 (29.5%) and in 1996 (30%).
- Women are 13% of the Members of the Legislative Assembly, 26% of municipal councillors and 12% of mayors. In the elected band governments of the 15 First Nations communities, women represent 29% of councillors and 27% of the chiefs.
- Women account for just 36% of full-time regular students in the Community College, and are mostly concentrated in traditionally female-dominated training programs. Female Community College graduates of 2006 who were working full-time a year after graduating, earned on average 20% less than male graduates.
- In N.B. universities, women were 58% of full-time students but only 18% in engineering and the applied sciences and 26% in mathematics and physical sciences, fields where their numbers are decreasing. Women who graduated in 1999 from a university and who had full-time employment in 2004 earned 18% less than the men who graduated with them.
- 5% of all female employees worked for minimum wage, and 3% of men. Most female minimum wage workers in the province are adults, while most men who are paid at the minimum wage rate are teenagers.
- Women make up 12% of convicted offenders and about 17% of young offenders. Aboriginal persons are over represented among offenders, especially among incarcerated women.
- About 2.4% of all women in N.B. in 2006 were Aboriginal identity women. 61% of them are living off reserve. The average age of Aboriginal identity women is less than 32 years. The median age of the rest of women in the province is over 42 years of age. About 7% of Aboriginal identity women have a university degree, compared to about 12% of non-Aboriginal identity women.

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# COMMUNITY RELATIONS

## INFORMATION SERVICE

The Advisory Council office receives requests for information from hundreds of groups and individuals, mostly through a toll-free telephone line and email. For example, women dealing with situations in their family or workplace, or wishing to launch an initiative in their community, contact us for referral or information; groups request advice or support, invite us to partner, or inform us of events for inclusion in our Events Calendar; businesses and municipalities contact us for information relating to pay equity, workplace bullying or family policies. Our weekly newspaper column, e-newsletter and our occasional opinion pieces in provincial newspapers invariably attract responses and requests for service.

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS

**N.B. Women's News / NouvELLES** - This weekly email bulletin about women's issues is sent by request to about 3,000 subscribers and is archived on the Council internet site.

**2008 Report Card on the Status of Women in N.B.** - This biennial report, published in February 2008, was distributed to groups, politicians and civil servants and the public, and presented at various events.

**Internet Site** - The Advisory Council internet site, [www.acswcccf.nb.ca](http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca), provides all current Council documents. Visitors can subscribe to the e-newsletter, submit their name to the Talent Bank, and check what equality-related events are occurring. Several thousand visitors use the site each month, with the most popular texts being recent columns, the Events Calendar, the Report Card on the Status of Women and publications on sex, pregnancy, workplace bullying and living common law. The site recorded over a million hits in 2007-08. (Visits are the number of web browsers who have visited our site. Hits are downloads made to the server within a visit.)

**Nancy's Award** - The Advisory Council sponsors Nancy's Award to recognize student projects on N.B. women's history. It is awarded to middle-level students participating in regional Heritage Fairs. The award is named in honour of Nancy Morton, a woman who challenged her enslavement to a York County Loyalist in 1800. The projects must deal with some aspect of N.B. women's history and highlights an aspect of women's lives, their individual or group accomplishments or their individual or group struggle for equality and must be based on historical research.

**Events** - The Advisory Council organizes numerous public events around the province in both official languages.

The information from these sessions is made available to others through our newsletter and internet site, and some presentations are recorded and the audio made available from our internet site.

Lunch & Learns have been effective as a means for the Advisory Council to raise issues and provide information on key women's issues. Since 2003, thousands have participated around the province.

Over 1750 persons attended our various Lunch & Learns held in 2007-08:

How to Get Fair Wages for Child Care Workers, Martha Friendly, Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John.  
Child Care, It's More than Money - How to invest to promote quality in child care, Lynell Anderson, Fredericton and Moncton.

Le salaire a-t-il encore un sexe? - Les moments forts de l'implantation de l'équité salariale au Québec, Hélène Massé, Edmundston.

Eating Disorders, Fredericton.

Workplace Bullying, Fredericton, Tracadie, Bathurst, Edmundston, Saint John, Moncton, Woodstock and Dalhousie.

Experiences of Abused Rural Women, Fredericton, Caraquet, Campbellton and Woodstock.

City Hall 101, Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John.  
Addictions, Addictions Services and N.B. Women, Fredericton, Saint John.

Elder Abuse - Threat in the Third Age, Moncton and Fredericton.

On ne travaille pas pour des pinottes, Moncton and Fredericton.

Human Trafficking, Moncton and Saint John.

Update on the Status of N.B. Women, Miramichi, Fredericton, Bathurst, Caraquet, Edmundston, Grand Sault and Saint John.

Sex Matters - Gender-Based Analysis, Fredericton and Moncton.

RAVE - Ending the Holy Hush - Abuse In Families of Faith, Saint John, Sussex and Moncton.

**Silent No More: Speak out for Choice** - The Advisory Council, Law Students for Choice, Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada and the UNB Faculty of Law organized a pro-choice meeting in April 2007 in Fredericton. A panel of medical and legal experts addressed the need for change in abortion access before an audience of over 300 persons.

The Advisory Council also operated kiosks at fairs and conferences and gave presentations at several conferences and meetings.

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## COMMUNITY RELATIONS (continued...)

### RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

The Advisory Council met with several Ministers to discuss issues of concern to women relevant to their department. The Advisory Council has advised officials within provincial government departments that it is available for consultation or partnership on issues of concern to women.

The Council was invited to a meeting with the Executive Council Office Policy and Priorities Deputy Minister responsible for the non-profit groups initiative, to discuss advocacy groups needs.

The Council was consulted by the Executive Council Office on revisions to the appointment process to boards and commission.

The Council is represented on various provincial government committees including a committee working on a violence against women prevention campaign.

### RELATIONS WITH WOMEN'S GROUPS

The Advisory Council collaborated in 2007-08 in various joint ventures with women's and equality seeking groups, including collaboration in the organization of events, such as the play on pay equity, *On ne travaille pas pour des pinottes*, the session on access to abortion and several of the Lunch & Learn sessions. On a few occasions, we joined with New Brunswick or national groups to issue joint media releases on issues of concern, such as on child care, on protection of patients from physicians suspended in other provinces and on abortion access.

The Advisory Council brought advocacy groups together to meet with the Premier's Community Non-Profit Task Force in order to highlight issues specific to advocacy groups and to urge the Task Force to recommend funding guidelines for non-profit groups involved in advocating for change.

The Council internet site is offered as a clearinghouse for general news about New Brunswick women and women's groups. It includes documents from several other equality-seeking groups in the province.

The Council is represented ex officio on the board of the new francophone provincial feminist group, Regroupement féministe du N.-B. The Council is also a consulting member of the Atlantic francophone feminist group Femmes Équité Atlantique and provided them with training on gender-based analysis of community development plans.

### MEDIA

Several dozen media requests for interviews, background information and names of potential resource persons were received. Topics included abortion, workplace bullying, sexist comments, violence, midwifery and collection of support payments.

Throughout 2007-08, the Advisory Council Chairperson published a weekly column in the Moncton Times & Transcript. Occasional opinion pieces are also provided to the French daily newspaper Acadie Nouvelle and to other newspapers. In 2007-08, opinion pieces dealt with sexist comments in the Legislature, aboriginal women's rights, how to encourage women into politics, guns and violence against women, the need for a revamping of human rights powers, post-secondary education reform, bullying of women seeking abortion services, lack of civil legal aid, human trafficking, deaths related to spousal violence and the status of New Brunswick women. The columns are also contributed to StraightGoods.ca and to a few weekly papers that request it.

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

No complaint concerning the Advisory Council was filed with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in 2007-08.

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## PUBLICATIONS IN 2007-2008

The following publications, available at [www.acswcccf.nb.ca](http://www.acswcccf.nb.ca) or from the Advisory Council office, were released in 2007-08:

*2008 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick* - a biennial publication that gathers available statistics on New Brunswick women and income, health, violence, education, paid and unpaid work, positions of influence and justice. February 2008.

Supporting Population Growth in New Brunswick, brief to the Population Growth Secretariat, July 2007.

Comments submitted to the Task Force on Right to Information and Protection of Personal Information, June 2007.

Comments submitted to the Personal Health Information Task Force, June 2007.

Women and Post-Secondary Education, brief presented to the Commission on Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick, July 2007.

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# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

March 31, 2008