



ANNUAL REPORT 2008-2009

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Chairperson's Message

The Advisory Council's work - bringing before the government and the public and advising the Minister on matters of interest and concern to women continues under the responsibility of succeeding New Brunswick women. I began my term as Chairperson September 2008, halfway through the fiscal year. I salute my predecessor, Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, as well as the other Chairpersons who came before me and I am proud to continue the work.

The past year has been a time of considerable activity. The 2008 Report Card on the Status of Women, launched at the beginning of 2008, was central to a lot of these activities in the first months of 2008-09. The Advisory Council brought to the attention of the relevant government and other authorities, the data in the Report Card that pointed to the need for change, if equality is to be reached. We also launched during the year dozens of factsheets based on the data in the Report Card.

The Advisory Council's Action plan puts emphasis on the equality issues that we want to see advanced - pay equity, poverty and violence reduction, access to affordable and quality child care services, women in politics, Aboriginal women's rights. But it also aims for sustained mobilization of New Brunswick women and women's groups - the material that change is made of.

Our Action Plan also directs us to work to increase the presence of women in all sectors of New Brunswick society, especially in elected poli-

tics, since that may well facilitate change in the other issues. Finally we seize every opportunity to increase the use of gender equality analysis - especially given women's under representation in decision-making positions.

The Council maintains its concerted effort to be in the communities as much as possible. We held our quarterly meetings in different regions, we take time at those meetings to hear from our members about the concerns in their region and we hold information sessions, mostly free Lunch and Learns in several New Brunswick communities. In 2008-09, we held over 30 sessions in 10 communities, including two First Nation communities. We met with the Members of the Legislative Assembly in December to seek their help in advancing women's issues through legislation and party policies. A future goal of making municipal councils aware of women's issues is pending for 2009-10.

Behind every successful woman are all the women who came before her - an often used slogan by the Advisory Council because it shows the common interest and solidarity of women and the work of creating equality.

Let us see what we can do together in the coming year.

Elsie Hambrook

Chairperson

March 31, 2009

WHO WE ARE

The members of the Advisory Council in 2007-2008 are:
Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, Moncton, Chairperson, replaced in September 2008
Elsie Hambrook, Quispamsis, appointed September 2008
Odette Richard, Westmorland Kent, appointed June 2004, (Vice-Chairperson March 2005)
Jayme L.J. O'Donnell, Fredericton, appointed March 2009
Rita Boucher, Acadian Peninsula, appointed September 2008
Sharon McKinnon, Chaleur, appointed September 2008
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, appointed November 2007
Karla Dawn Reynolds, Kings/Albert, appointed April 2006
Dorothy Hamilton, Restigouche, appointed April 2006
Jackie Matthews, Charlotte, re-appointed 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 three meetings in 2008-09, each in a different part of the province. In addition, three conference call meetings were held. An orientation session for new members appointed in September 2008 was organized in conjunction with a visioning session held by the minister responsible for the status of women.

Quarterly meetings usually 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.

June 26-27, 2008, Campbellton, N.B.

Tax review - Members discussed the tight timeline of the government's tax review announced in June and the contract the Advisory Council has concluded with Queen's University Law professor Kathleen Lahey to prepare data analysis of the potential impact of the proposed tax review to women, men and various subgroups.

Sex Work - Following a discussion of a consultant's summary of the situation as regards to sex work and attendance to a public luncheon conference on the topic of sex workers in the Maritimes, the Advisory Council adopted a position statement on sex work and women's rights, addressing practical issues of concern to sex workers.

HPV - The members discussed the meeting on the Human Papillomavirus Virus and vaccine with the provincial Chief Medical Officer and the head of the N.B. Cancer Network, held at the Council office in May, as a result of which HPV information resources were added to the Council's website and a recommendation in support of provincial cervical cancer screening registry was made.

Wage Gap Action Plan - The members discussed the N.B. government's second Wage Gap Action Plan Progress Report released in June and the limitations of the pay equity efforts. The members said the ACSW should produce an evaluation including the organization of a meeting this fall of women's groups to hear concerns.

Workplan 2008-2009 - A consultant facilitated a strategic planning session to adopt another 18 month workplan. It was agreed the new Action Plan would be finalized during a conference call in the next few weeks.

June 26, 2008— Public Lunch & Learn, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes - Listening, for a change...* with authors/professors Gayle MacDonald of St. Thomas University and Leslie Ann Jeffrey of University of New Brunswick

Saint John, co-authors of the book, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back*. About 30 persons, including health and social service professionals and members of the public and media joined Council members for this session. The audio tape of the presentation was added to the Advisory Council website.

Conference call meeting - August 26, 2008

A revised Action Plan for the period July 2008 to December 2009 was discussed. Further changes and additions were made.

Conference call meeting - September 8, 2008

Members adopted a revised Action Plan for the period July 2008 to December 2009.

Conference call meeting - September 10, 2008

A visioning session to build a working relationship, proposed by the Minister for later in September, was discussed. The Chairperson said she had informed the minister during the summer that she would not stand for reappointment because of family obligations.

October 16-17, 2008 - St. Andrews

Tax Review - The members discussed women's groups inquiries about next steps after the Lunch & Learn on Sex and Taxes organized by the Advisory Council in August 2008 that featured tax expert Kathleen Lahey's analysis of the provincial government's tax reform proposals. The Council has been informed that the Select Committee on Tax Review would meet with a delegation of women, but no date has been set. The members discussed and adopted a position statement on tax reform, in response to the tax review proposals presented in the June 2008 N.B. Department of Finance discussion paper, drawing on the results of the quantitative study commissioned by the Council from tax expert Kathleen Lahey and on other feminist taxation analyses.

NB Wage Gap Action Plan - In view of the low take-up by private sector employers of voluntary implementation of pay equity, and the need for stronger government measures, the Council will bring together women's groups on a mini-skills conference with media training and pay equity workshops.

Child Care - The members met with Jody Dallaire, of the N.B. Child Care Coalition, to discuss child care issues, especially the threat of corporate investment in the child care system in New Brunswick.

October 16, 2008 - Public Lunch & Learn, *Quality, Available, Affordable Child Care in New Brunswick - Are We Dreaming in Technicolor?* - About 20 persons from

COUNCIL MEETINGS (continued...)

St. Andrews and St. Stephen joined Council members to hear Jody Dallaire, Executive Director of the New Brunswick Child Care Coalition and Chair of Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada. She spoke of heightened public awareness about child care as a societal issue, the government's pay equity exercise for child care workers, and "seamless day" pilot projects promised for four N.B. communities. Developments that could compromise progress include the proposed Universal Child Care Benefit and flat tax. Session participants spoke about the chronic funding problems faced by child care facilities and the high cost of care for parents, who are also often solicited for fund-raising activities.

Media Training with Bissett Matheson Consulting - An interactive workshop on dealing with the media was held, with members participating in exercises to develop media interview skills.

February 26-27, 2009, Fredericton

In her report, Chairperson Elsie Hambrook noted the variety of issues that have attracted Council and media attention, including tax review and emergency contraception. She noted the public interest generated by Council members' opinion texts published in local newspapers, and encouraged members to continue the media presence to promote awareness of issues

Emergency Contraception - The need to improve access to emergency contraception was discussed. It was agreed that the Council would continue to make known its concerns about awareness, access and cost of emergency contraception, and would continue to lobby to end New Brunswick pharmacists' practice of requiring a questionnaire be filled and selling it behind the counter, despite the fact it can now be placed on pharmacy shelves.

Poverty Reduction - A position statement on a poverty reduction strategy was developed and adopted, incorporating new recommendations as well as reforms advocated by the Advisory Council through the years.

Mercury Amalgam - A position statement on mercury dental amalgam was adopted.

Wage Gap Action Plan - Members received an overview of pay gap and pay equity developments through the years, from the Advisory Council's 1978 recommendation to the current government's promises regarding a new public sector pay equity law. The Advisory Council's concerns regarding the current Wage Gap Action Plan - notably inadequacies in the pay equity criteria and in the indicators to measure progress - were discussed.

Women's Issues Branch - The Assistant Deputy Minister of the government's Executive Council Office Women's Issues Branch gave an update on issues of common concern. The Branch focuses on violence and economic security (especially the gender wage gap).

February 26, 2009 - Public Lunch & Learn, Moving Women's Issues Forward, with Sue Calhoun, national president of the Canadian Federation of Business & Professional Women. 55 people including civil servants, small business, financial sector people, academics, community activists, joined Advisory Council members for an overview of the evolution of the BPW Clubs in Canada and its advocacy efforts on a range of issues including pay equity. Some participants expressed interest in founding local clubs.

Women and Politics - Members discussed initiatives to encourage more women to run for political office. Members noted the importance of making the Legislative Assembly more women/family friendly and reducing the often adversarial and restrictive nature of the nomination races. Since political parties are already setting their slates of candidates for 2010, members agreed the issue was urgent: a letter should be sent to all political parties encouraging them to be proactive in recruiting women candidates, the idea of a countdown could be promoted and Lunch & Learns could be organized.

ISSUES

ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Advisory Council considers it has a responsibility 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 organized a series of events (workshops, Lunch & Learns) on issues of concern to aboriginal women, some aimed at non-aboriginals and some for aboriginal women.

Four intensive workshops developed for an Aboriginal audience on issues pertinent to Aboriginal women and their communities were organized in 2008-09.

A half-day workshop on healthy personal and community relationships was held at Saint Mary's First Nations community.

In Tobique First Nation, a full-day workshop on Bill C-31: Past, Present and ... Working for More Change with Sharon McIvor, the lawyer/activist, member of the Lower Nicola Band from British Columbia, who is contesting the sexist provisions of the Indian Act, was also a celebration of Tobique women's contribution to that same struggle in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Advisory Council also contracted with CESO (Canadian Executive Services Organization) to provide two of their Aboriginal Women for Tomorrow Program workshops: Skills Development for Boards and Budgeting/Financial Management. Aboriginal women from around the province came to the free sessions provided by CESO executives.

Four other sessions were also organized to raise awareness about Aboriginal women's issues in the non-Aboriginal population: the role of elders, Aboriginal languages, sexism in the Indian Act, and Aboriginal governance.

A special webpage, Rights of First Nations Women, was added to the Advisory Council website to provide links to groups, resources, photos of artifacts and events in the struggle for Aboriginal women's rights, and the audio recording of several recent public events on issues of concern to Aboriginal women in the province.

The Council is represented on the advisory committee on violence against aboriginal women formed by the Minister responsible for the status of women.

SEX WORK - Summary

Sex work is currently legal in Canada, but it is next to impossible to engage in it without breaking a law. Laws that aim to push prostitution away from our view increase the risks associated with sex work and the

violence experienced by the women. Their consequent marginalization leaves them vulnerable to abuse. This is made worse by the adversarial relationship established between police and sex workers; their experiences with police make them unwilling to seek help. This has also deprived sex workers of the protection of the law when they are victim of a crime while engaging in prostitution. Sex workers "have little expectation that the police will protect them from violence and every expectation that the police will arrest or fine them if given the chance" - and because this is known in the general population and by men who purchase their services, sex workers are highly vulnerable to violence, robbery and other abuse. The Criminal Code should be enforced against people who threaten, harm or exploit sex workers. There is need for reform of the Criminal Code, with consultation of sex workers and organizations working with sex workers.

Most women enter prostitution because of difficult life circumstances but they are persons exercising choices. Viewing sex workers only as victims needing to be saved is demeaning. Individuals, community groups, churches, municipalities, and other levels of government need occasions to discuss attitudes toward sex workers and the need for these attitudes to be informed by the reality of the lives of sex workers, and by their rights in Canada.

Prostitution as practiced today often brings about harmful consequences - drug use, physical and mental health problems, involvement in criminal justice, loss of contact with family, loss of safe housing, and exposure to abuse. Sex workers need health and services such as counseling, substance abuse programs, needle exchanges and sterilization kits, street-wise workshops and condoms, as well as initiatives to reduce violence against sex workers. Agencies dealing with these issues must be aware of the needs of sex workers. Government intervention is required to provide additional resources and to bring together service organizations that are or should be involved in the delivery of harm reduction measures.

Sex workers who want to leave the trade often need help to deal with low employment skills, personal problems, and with attitudes about them in the work world. Government leadership is needed to fund outreach workers and to streamline solutions for this population: housing, drug detoxification and mental health services, education and employment.

In recognition of the fact that the average age that women enter sex work is 14, services for youth at risk must be improved, so that sex work does not become the only real or perceived option for survival.

ISSUES (continued...)

In recognition of the fact that some women enter sex work because of their limited options, there is need for coordinated measures to address poverty, violence against women, gaps in social services and problems with access to appropriate drug treatment and mental health services, with particular reference to the needs of sex workers.

TAX REFORM - Summary

In June 2008, the provincial government announced a major tax reform exercise. To encourage participation by equality seeking groups in the two weeks of hearings, the Advisory Council created or made available several resources, including Sample Questions To Ask While Preparing Your Submission. Among those questions: What is the anticipated effect on equality, on each type of family, on people living alone and on the relative position of women and men? Why does the discussion paper only mention "one-earner family"? Given existing inequalities between women and men, between types of families, between low-income individuals/families and other groups, what measures has the Committee considered that could bring about more equality in the results? If the proposals have the effect of making it less attractive for a parent to be in the paid workforce, what programs will be in place to help that parent with labour force reentry, loss of pension credits and other benefits. Which proposals are of benefit only to those who have enough income to actually pay income taxes?

Before the end of the hearing period by the Select Committee on Tax Review, the Advisory Council presented some preliminary comments, while awaiting completion of the Advisory Council commissioned study on the potential impact of the proposed tax reform and the adoption by the Council of a position paper. The Advisory Council expressed concern about the tight timeframe for the tax reform consultation. The Council reiterated its recommendations of guidelines governing "government consultations". The Council noted the absence of gender or diversity analysis in the discussion paper.

By end of July 2008, the study by Queens University law professor and tax expert Kathleen Lahey was completed, made public and made available to the Select Committee on Tax Review. The study, *What About Women? Gender Analysis of Discussion Paper on New Brunswick's Tax System*, believed to be the first gender analysis of a major prospective tax policy document in Canada, concluded that the proposed changes to the tax system would widen the gap between women's and men's total incomes, taxable incomes, and after tax incomes and that several of the benefits proposed by the government would not go to those most in need,

since about 41% of all N.B. women who filed income tax returns had no tax to pay at all, nor did 27% of men.

In September 2008, the Advisory Council adopted a position paper on the proposed tax reform. The Advisory Council urged governments undertaking fiscal reform to:

- Conduct and make publicly available gender-based analysis of the potential effects of any tax policy changes - positive and negative, direct and indirect - on the relative position of women, men and diverse groups of women and men.
- Ensure the conditions for effective gender-based analysis: sex-disaggregated data, high-level commitment by policy-makers, adequate human and financial resources, tools and training, and accountability by making GBA part of staff workload and evaluation.
- Consider the potential impact of any tax changes on government revenue as well as on distribution of income, consumption and property taxes among individuals and businesses.
- Ensure that the existing degree of progressivity in the personal and corporate income tax structure is not reduced. Maintain graduated tax rates to help reduce the income gaps between and among women and men.
- Provide refunds to lower-income individuals to offset the costs of single-rate consumption taxes and adjust this compensation to neutralize the impact of any rate increases. Regressive taxes that are levied at the same rate on all citizens regardless of income level place a heavier burden on those forced to spend all or most of their income on life's necessities.
- Make tax credits refundable so that low-income people who currently pay little or no tax also benefit from them.
- Dedicate adequate public expenditures to essential programs and services such as child care, instead of using tax measures to deliver small subsidies to individuals and families.
- Tax and benefit measures should be structured for individuals not couples or families. Joint measures that provide benefits to women as part of a couple or family reinforce economic dependency and may discourage labour force participation.

POVERTY REDUCTION - Summary

Focused government action is key to reducing and preventing poverty. Our current patchwork of public programs and voluntary sector initiatives is not adequate. The social safety net has holes that charity and non-profit organizations cannot be expected to plug. What is needed is decent employment with a living wage for those who can work, a decent level of support for those who cannot, and full participation in the economic and

ISSUES (continued...)

social life of communities for all citizens.

The Advisory Council urges the New Brunswick government to adopt an evidence-based poverty reduction strategy that will:

- Integrate a gender-based diversity perspective. Women and children are more likely to live in poverty, experience poverty differently and face different constraints than men in their struggle to leave poverty. Aboriginal women, lone parent mothers, women with disabilities, recent immigrants, women with addictions and women in conflict with the law are among the hardest hit by poverty.
- Take a comprehensive approach with a focus on prevention. Actions must address the multiple dimensions of poverty and disadvantage, from social assistance and minimum wage to education and training, fiscal policy, housing, health and support for caregiving. Initiatives must target the conditions that help perpetuate poverty. Actions must be coordinated across government departments, and among all levels of government and Aboriginal authorities.
- Set targets and timelines, with well-resourced monitoring mechanisms. It is essential to establish to track progress and to ensure accountability for results. Sex and diversity-disaggregated data must be used in evaluating results and reports published at regular intervals.

The plan should address the following priority action areas:

- Minimum wage: Raise the minimum wage to bring full-time full-year earnings to at least the poverty line and introduce a formula linking future increases to an objective, evolving standard, indexed to the cost of living. Full-time minimum wage work should provide an income above the poverty line (Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-offs).
- Gender pay gap: Pursue actions to close the gender pay gap, including funding for women-centred training and workplace integration initiatives for non-traditional employment and the introduction of proactive public and private sector pay equity legislation that requires women's traditional jobs be paid according to their real value. Women today have at least as much education as men and are in the paid labour force most of their lives. Yet New Brunswick women earn considerably less on average, a pay gap that has long-term consequences for women, including lower pension benefits and savings.
- Employment Insurance: Reform the eligibility rules and benefit levels of the Employment Insurance program to better fit the paid work patterns and family realities of women's lives. Many more women than men do not

qualify for regular EI benefits. Many women do not qualify for the EI maternity and parental leave benefits, and others cannot afford to live on the current level of benefits. An expanded compassionate care leave program is required to support women's caregiving responsibilities for aging and chronically ill relatives.

- Child care: Invest in building a publicly funded, high quality, affordable, not for profit child care system to ensure access for all children. Most New Brunswick children are in some kind of child care, and most of that child care is not held to minimum standards. Child care must be valued as an essential public service. We must invest in the creation of child care spaces - especially for infants - offered at affordable rates, in better trained and paid child care workers, in services that offer safe and well-equipped learning environments, with flexible scheduling to accommodate all parents, from the shift worker to the student or stay-at-home mother.
- Affordable housing: Invest in new construction, renovation and rent subsidies to improve access to quality, affordable housing for all citizens. The rising costs of market housing and long waiting lists for public housing are forcing growing numbers of women into substandard accommodations or onto the street. Aboriginal women living on- and off-reserve have great unmet needs.
- Health: Implement a comprehensive reproductive health strategy with measures to reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies, particularly among teenagers, and improve women's access to mental health and addictions services. There are still too many teen pregnancies and significant regional variations in rates. We must ensure that youth and people of all ages throughout the province have access to accurate information and confidential and non-judgmental services for family planning, abortion, STI prevention and treatment, maternal and newborn care and parenting support. Women's mental health and addictions treatment needs are different than men's and the services provided are often ill-adapted and difficult to access.
- Social assistance: Peg social assistance rates to an objective standard to reflect the rising cost of basic needs and the minimum required for a life of dignity. Reform social assistance policies that have punitive or counterproductive effects. The federal government must increase funding to provinces for social assistance, and attach national standards of adequacy to ensure that social assistance rates meet the real costs of living. Some welfare policies penalize people who are trying to help themselves. One example is the economic unit policy. Eligibility should be determined on an individual basis in the case of single persons who are not legally married nor in a legally recognized common-law relationship, taking into account the income and needs of the applicant. A new definition of economic unit should

ISSUES (continued...)

correspond to the financial support obligations set out in other laws for legally married or common-law New-Brunswickers.

- Access to justice: Increase the availability of family law support services and access to legal aid for family law matters, and expand coverage to poverty law issues.

- Tax policy: Ensure that fiscal policies do not deepen existing inequities between women and men, and particular groups of women and men. In particular, a progressive tax structure must be maintained. The existing modest level of progressivity should not be reduced in the New Brunswick tax system, since it offsets to a small degree the existing gender income gap by requiring that those with higher incomes pay a higher share of their income in tax.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Municipal - The Advisory Council raised the problem created by the absence of restrictions on how much money candidates for municipal elections may spend on campaigning, and no requirements for filing statements of donations received. Without spending limits, special interests can more easily ensure their representative gets in. The lack of campaign financing controls has a disproportionate effect on women, since women have less income and more rarely represent moneyed interests. The Advisory Council also issued a media release following the May 2008 municipal elections to comment on the slight increase in the number of women elected, and to share recommendations to the many municipalities that elected no or few women.

Provincial - The Advisory Council expressed concern that New Brunswick is the province with the lowest number and the lowest proportion of women in Cabinet, and recommended that measures be adopted in the medium and long term since the situation is not improving by itself nor with current attempts to fix it. The Council reiterated its recommendations that the government introduce legislation requiring political parties to adopt plans that contribute to greater gender balance in the candidate search process and riding nominations, and, in collaboration with political parties, fund training and mentoring initiatives designed to encourage and prepare women to run for elective office. Initiatives could be undertaken in partnership with women's and community groups and municipalities. The Council also recommended that the provincial government revise its limits on electoral financing to limit the costs of running election campaigns and introduce such limits for nomination campaigns. The Advisory Council also pointed out that, in the absence of gender parity in the ranks of the elected, it becomes even more important that a gen-

dered perspective be adopted in all the research and proposals submitted to government for consideration, and the government's own Guide to Gender Based Analysis should become mandatory policy and part of the accountability framework.

Federal - A list of issues of importance to women in the 2008 federal election, *Women's List - Federal Election 2008*, was released. A summary of 10 topics and sources for further information were provided to help women voters speak with candidates or decide on their vote: the constitutional promise of equality, equal rights for Aboriginal women; early childhood care & education; a livable income; affordable housing; violence against women; access to justice; maternity & parental benefits; women's health; and female political representation.

HOME SUPPORT SERVICES

The Advisory Council continued to express its concern about the recruitment and retention problems related to home support workers in the province, not only because most workers and clients of home support are females, but because the reason their status and employment conditions are poor is that their work is historically women's work and undervalued. The Advisory Council urged the provincial government to place the responsibility of home support services with the Department of Health and improve the funding provided for salaries and the standards for workers.

MATERNITY AND PARENTAL LEAVES

The Advisory Council continued to advocate improved access and benefits to the national benefits program. In 2008-09, the Advisory Council also brought to the attention of the provincial government the fact that time out on maternity, parental or adoption leave is not counted as eligible service for a public employee's pension. A woman on maternity/parental or adoption leave must stop contributing to the public service pension plan. One option is for the provincial government to introduce a dropout provision similar to the one in the Canada Pension Plan, which allows a woman whose earnings stopped or are lower because she is raising a child under 7, to exclude that period from the calculation of her pension benefits.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Advisory Council expressed concern about the elimination of the family court social worker/mediators and the reduction of the budget provided for legal aid services announced in March 2009, saying it feared the cuts would mean fewer options for separating families and longer wait times and higher costs for courts.

ISSUES (continued...)

MERCURY AMALGAM - Summary

Mercury poses well-documented risks to health and the environment. It is a component in an amalgam used for dental fillings, sometimes called “silver” or amalgam fillings. Mercury vapour is released during chewing, tooth brushing or grinding, as well as when amalgam is placed in or removed from teeth and dental amalgam contributes significantly to mercury body burden in people with amalgam fillings. Health Canada says that amalgam contributes detectable amounts of mercury to the body but the levels do not approach those recognized to cause illness. However, Health Canada says it is a good idea to reduce exposure to mercury. Some countries have banned the use of mercury-containing dental fillings, to protect health and the environment.

Concern has also been expressed over the handling of mercury by dental personnel, who are predominantly females of child-bearing age. There is also concern over disposal of mercury.

Mercury amalgam fillings are cheaper than current alternatives, and in New Brunswick and Canada, have often been used, with adults and children, without consultation or consistent effort to inform the patient/ parent of concerns or alternatives. Mercury fillings are especially favoured in cases where costs are being kept down, ex.: with social assistance recipients, for whom the government pays dentists a percentage of the usual rate. Women and children would be the first affected by any danger linked to mercury amalgam.

The Advisory Council recommends to the provincial government that public funds not be used for mercury amalgam fillings for population groups for which Health Canada recommends alternatives to mercury amalgam.

The Advisory Council decided to communicate to governments and professional associations, its concern for the health risks of mercury amalgam for women and children; the need for informed consent of patients; the need to follow the Health Canada advisory about using non-mercury fillings for young children, pregnant women, anyone with kidney disease, or if fillings would be next to braces and about not removing existing mercury fillings from pregnant women; the need for protection of the safety and health of dental care personnel; the need to require that dental clinics follow standards for removal and disposal of amalgam, and the need for health insurance to provide coverage for mercury-free fillings at no additional expense. The Advisory Council also decided to make efforts to educate women about this issue, their right to participate in dental care decisions, their right to decline mercury dental amalgams,

and about the need to urge their dental care insurance to pay for the mercury-free materials.

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION

The Advisory Council continued to advocate improved access to emergency contraception, within the context of a comprehensive sexual health strategy that would aim to reduce unplanned pregnancies and the incidence of sexually transmitted infections as well as promote maternal and child health. Since 2008, emergency contraception (Plan B) is supposed to be available directly on pharmacy shelves in Canada, though New Brunswick pharmacists have mostly continued to keep it behind the counter and to dispense it only when consulted, after a questionnaire has been answered.

The Advisory Council agrees with the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities that Plan B should be available without having to consult a pharmacist. The Council took various actions to create awareness about the lack of awareness about the availability emergency contraception, the problems caused by pharmacists' requirement that personal questions be answered, usually at the cash, before the drug can be purchased and the fact that what was gained in accessibility, when the drug became available without a prescription, may be lost in affordability, since prescription drug plans and provincial drug formularies dropped Plan B and a pharmacist counselling fee has been added to the cost. Letters were sent to the New Brunswick Pharmacists' Association, New Brunswick Pharmaceutical Society, private drug plan companies, the minister of Health and the minister responsible for the status of women.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Advisory Council urged the government to launch the promised domestic violence death reviews. These should be done of every domestic-violence related death, by a multi-disciplinary team with a view to making recommendations to help reduce domestic violence and homicides and should include a periodical audit to evaluate implementation of the review committee's recommendations.

The Advisory Council sent letters to relevant government ministers about the lack of availability of statistics on woman abuse incidents, police response and court outcomes, information that had been available since the early 1990s. The situation was caused by both the provincial government's decision to end the compilation of statistics on justice system response to woman abuse incidents and data system changes which made RCMP data unavailable for several months. As a result, the Advisory Council's 2008 Report Card on the Status of Women could not include the number of woman abuse incidents

ISSUES (continued...)

reported to police in N.B.; of woman abuse incidents cleared by charge; of accused appearing in court; of offenders sentenced; of offenders given jail time, conditional sentence, probation or fines; and the average length of jail term. The provincial government has pledged to make the data available by 2010.

GENDER BASED ANALYSIS

Ombudsman - A letter was sent to the Office of the Ombudsman recommending the inclusion of data by sex and diversity analysis and equality indicators in their reports, since programs or policies under examination may have the intended impact on some groups only. The significant biological and socially constructed differences between women and men means that groups may be affected differently by programs and policies, especially if initiatives are developed without the full participation of both groups. Therefore, analysis of the fairness and appropriateness of programs and policies must take those differences into account. Assuming “no differences” can hide unfair results.

Child and Youth Advocate - A letter was sent to the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate following the release of the report, *More than just words: A Statistical Backgrounder to the 2008 State of Our Children and Youth Address*. Because the realities of girls and boys can be significantly different, the Advisory Council recommended that future reports provide all statistics by sex and other diversity variables such as Aboriginal identity, and include rates of child and family poverty, birth and abortion among teen girls, substance abuse, gambling, sexual behaviour and STD rates, youth among addictions services and mental health clientele by presenting problems, school enrolments and dropouts, spending per pupil, international PISA test scores, sentenced and incarcerated youth, post-secondary institution enrolments by programs, total investment in youth care, children in care and youths receiving post-guardianship services, children in care on psychotropic drugs, labour force participation, unemployment, workplace accidents and Workers' Compensation claims and percentage of children who participate in sports.

Commissioner on the Future of Local Governance - The Advisory Council recommended to the Commissioner that the examination of the structure and organization of local governance include concern for inclusive governance processes. Suggestions were made for inclusion of diversity/gender analysis.

Community Foundations - Letters were sent to the Fredericton and Saint John Community Foundations following the publication of their Vital Signs statistical reports

on community development indicators. The Advisory Council recommended that data by sex, diversity analysis and equality indicators be included in future editions, since a key measure of community health is the level of equality between the rich and the poor, newcomers and long-time residents, Aboriginal peoples and others and women and men. A list of good practices based on gender-based diversity approaches were provided, including municipal safety audits, physical activity programs for people on limited incomes, single gender drug treatment programs, employment training that integrates concern for family responsibilities.

Finance - Letters were sent recommending that gender-based analysis / diversity analysis by sex be conducted during development of budgets and fiscal reviews, citing governments' obligation to not perpetuate or increase inequality, even unintentionally. A suggestion was made for a roundtable of experts and community stakeholders with the Finance Minister.

Health— The Advisory Council urged the Minister of Health to require gender-based analysis of all health policies and programs, to incorporate analysis, information and data according to sex in all reports of Health NB. The Report Card included evidence of a high number of females consulting mental health centres due to depressive symptoms, a high number of females of all age groups who are physically inactive, limited access to women-only addictions services and absence of access to long-term residential addictions treatment for women, high number and unexplained significant regional differences in Caesarean sections, hysterectomies and birth rate to teenagers, lack of a program to promote planned pregnancies and limited access to abortions.

Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour - The Advisory Council expressed concern that the Skills Development Action Plan process and the new Standing Forum on Skills Development have not integrated a commitment to gender equality and to changing the relative position of women and men in the labour force. The Advisory Council recommended that, since the obstacles to labour force participation, literacy and entrepreneurship can be significantly different for females and males, and in order to break the unproductive segregation and clustering in jobs, the Action Plan should include a statement about equality and commit to analyzing data, proposals and outcomes according to sex and by diversity groups.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

INFORMATION SERVICE

The Advisory Council office receives requests for information from 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 workplace bullying or family policies. Our weekly newspaper column and newsletter and our occasional opinion pieces in provincial newspapers invariably attract responses and requests for additional information or service.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

NB Women's News / NouvELLES - This weekly email bulletin about women's issues is sent by request to almost 3,300 subscribers and is archived on the Council internet site.

2008 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick - This biennial report and the more than a dozen factsheets that are based on it, are popular items on the Council internet site and at various events. A new factsheet was launched in 2008-09, on Immigrant Women in New Brunswick.

Internet Site - The Advisory Council internet site, www.acswcccf.nb.ca, provides all current Council documents as well as a popular Events calendar. Visitors can subscribe to the e-newsletter, submit their name to the Talent Bank, and check what equality-related events are occurring in their region. Several thousand visitors use the site each month, with the most popular texts being our Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick, the brochures on sexual health, certain columns especially that on hypersexualisation of girls, and interestingly, the scanned version of the historic 1970 Report of The Royal Commission On The Status Of Women which we added to the Advisory Council site, since it was not otherwise available on the Internet. The site recorded over a million hits in 2008-09. (Visits are the number of web browsers who have visited our site. Hits are downloads made to the server within a visit.) Some publications by other New Brunswick groups are also included on the internet site.

Nancy's Award - The Advisory Council sponsors Nancy's Award to recognize student projects on New Brunswick 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 chal-

lenged her enslavement to a York County Loyalist in 1800. The projects must deal with some aspect of New Brunswick 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. 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. A new feature in the last year is that some sessions are audio recorded and posted to our website.

About 1250 persons attended the Lunch & Learn sessions held in 2008-09:

Ending the Holy Hush - Abuse in Families of Faith, with the RAVE team, Woodstock.

Sex, Lies & Economics, with Professor Joan McFarland, Fredericton.

Human Trafficking, with RCMP Cpl Mac MacIver, Miramichi.

Aboriginal Languages, or As Long As We Have The Language, with Elder Imelda Perley, Moncton. (Audio recording on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

Aboriginal Governance - Healthy Leadership, Healthy Communities, with Chief Candice Paul, Fredericton.

How the Indian Act still prefers male Indians and their descendants - and how Sharon McIvor is taking on the Indian Act, with lawyer and activist Sharon McIvor, Fredericton and Tobique. (Audio recording of the Fredericton session on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

On ne travaille pas pour des pinottes, a play by Théâtre Moncton Sable, Fredericton.

Elders in Aboriginal Communities, with Elder Gwen Bear, Fredericton. (Audio recording on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

Sex Workers in the Maritimes, with co-authors/ university professors Gayle MacDonald & Leslie Ann Jeffrey, Campbellton. (Audio recording on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

Sex and Taxes, with Queens Univ. tax expert Kathleen Lahey, Fredericton. (Audio recording on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

Workplace Bullying Website Launch, Marilyn Noble and Judy MacIntosh, Fredericton.

Women-friendly and Family-friendly Municipalities, with Nicole Boily, Moncton. (Audio recording on www.acswcccf.nb.ca)

Aboriginal Women Workshop on Healthy Relationships, with Natalie McBride & Miigam'agan, St. Mary's First Nation.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS (continued...)

Quality Child Care, with Jody Dallaire, St. Andrews, Saint John and Moncton.
First you research, then you make change - Celebrating 15 Years of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Research on Family Violence, Fredericton.
CESO workshop for Aboriginal Women on Budgeting/ Financial Management, Fredericton.
CESO workshop for Aboriginal Women on Boards Skills, Fredericton.
Women and Immigration in Atlantic Canada, Drs Evangelia Tastsoglou & Alexandra Dobrowolsky, Fredericton.
Moving Women's Issues Forward, CBPWF president Sue Calhoun, Fredericton.
Ending Sexual Violence, Kendra Cahill & Bill Patrick, Fredericton.

The Advisory Council organized in 2008-09 four intensive workshops developed for an Aboriginal audience on issues pertinent to Aboriginal women and their communities, some in collaboration with the NB Aboriginal Women's Council Inc. (Four other sessions were also organized to raise awareness about Aboriginal women's issues in the non Aboriginal population.) A half-day workshop on healthy relationships (personal and community) was held at Saint Mary's First Nations community. In Tobique First Nations, a full-day workshop on Bill C-31: Past, Present, and Future with Sharon McIvor, the lawyer/activist, member of the Lower Nicola Band from British Columbia, who is contesting the sexist provisions of the Indian Act, also became a celebration of Tobique women's contribution to that same struggle in the 1980s. The Advisory Council also contracted with CESO (Canadian Executive Services Organization) to provide two of their Aboriginal Women for Tomorrow Program workshops, Skills Development for Boards and Budgeting/ Financial Management. Aboriginal women from around the province came to the free sessions provided by CESO executives.

The Advisory Council also organized in November 2008 in Moncton a two-day skills conference for representatives of women's groups. Skills for Change 2008 included a one-day intensive workshop on doing media interviews and sessions on pay equity and on gender and tax reform. About 60 women representing about 20 groups joined Advisory Council members, during a snowstorm, for this session. Participants' evaluations of the event were very positive.

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

RELATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS

The Advisory Council met with some 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 members of the Advisory Council held a Meet and Greet with the Members of the Legislative Assembly at the Legislature, to raise awareness of the Advisory Council mandate and work, and its members in each region.

The Council is represented on several provincial government committees, including one working on a prevention campaign against violence against women, on skills development and one on housing renewal.

RELATIONS WITH EQUALITY GROUPS

The Advisory Council collaborated in 2008-09 in a few joint ventures with women's and equality seeking groups, including collaboration in the organization of events, such as a few Lunch & Learn sessions. The Council is often invited to join or assist coalitions working to advance issues, such as, in 2008-09, coalitions on informal caregiving and on poverty reduction. A few organizations sought assistance from the Advisory Council on gender-based analysis, either to conduct it on a topic, such as health, or in planning for an organization-wide commitment to it.

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 a provincial feminist group, Regroupement féministe du N.-B. The Council is also a consulting member of the Atlantic feminist group Femmes Équité Atlantique. The organizing committee of the 2009 Sommet des femmes, part of the Acadian World Congress being organized in the Acadian Peninsula in August 2009, requested the advice of the Council to develop its program.

MEDIA

Several dozen media requests for interviews, background information and names of potential resource persons were received. Topics included sexual assault charges, women's issues in the federal and the municipal elections, abortion, workplace bullying, violence, midwifery and collection of support payments.

Media releases were issued on several topics including women in the 2008 municipal elections, family court so

COMMUNITY RELATIONS (continued...)

cial workers and tax reform.

The Advisory Council Chairperson publishes a weekly column in the Moncton Times & Transcript and occasional opinion pieces in L'Acadie Nouvelle and other newspapers. The columns are also contributed to Straight-Goods.ca and to a few weekly papers that request it. They are translated and made available on the Internet site and also used in the Council's e-newsletter. In 2008-09, opinion pieces dealt with the low number of female media commentators, child care, access to legal aid, women in politics, violence against women, aboriginal

women's rights, the rights of common law couples, human rights, adult literacy, poverty reduction, specialized courts, workplace bullying, sex and taxes, sex work, social assistance, sex and mental health, sexual abuse by physicians, motherhood, population growth, emergency contraception, immigrant women, pay equity and hockey.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

No complaint concerning the Advisory Council was filed with the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages in 2008-09.

PUBLICATIONS IN 2008-2009

The following publications, available at www.acswccf.nb.ca or from the Advisory Council office, were released in 2008-09:

Tax Reform - Position Statement of the NB ACSW, September 2008

Sex Work And Women's Rights - Position statement by the N.B. Advisory Council on the Status of Women, June 2008.

Poverty Reduction Strategy - Position statement and recommendations, February 2009.

Factsheets of the *2008 Report Card on the Status of Women in New Brunswick* - Population and Families; Child Care Services; Senior Women; Family Responsibilities; Aboriginal Women; Women with Disabilities; Youth; Labour Force; Positions of Influence; Income & Poverty; Health; Violence; Immigrant Women in N.B.

What About Women? Gender Analysis of Discussion Paper on New Brunswick's Tax System, by Kathleen A. Lahey, Professor, Faculty of Law, Queen's University, July 31, 2008.

Ten Things You Need To Know About Poverty - A summary on poverty in New Brunswick, 2009.

"Use Your Shopping Power For Good!" - Suggestions for holiday gifts that make change, 2008.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

March 31, 2009