



New Brunswick
Women's Council

Annual Report
2017–2018



**New Brunswick Women's Council
Annual Report 2017–2018**

Province of New Brunswick
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1 CANADA

www.gnb.ca

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Transmittal Letters

From the Minister to the Lieutenant-Governor

The Honourable Brenda Murphy
Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick

Your Honour:

It is my privilege to submit the annual report for the New Brunswick Women's Council for the fiscal year April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

Sincerely,



Honourable Sherry Wilson
Minister of Executive Council Office – Women's Equality Branch

From the Co-chairs to the Minister responsible

Honourable Sherry Wilson
Minister of Executive Council Office – Women's Equality Branch

Minister,

We are pleased to present to you the annual report for the New Brunswick Women's Council for the fiscal year April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.

Sincerely,



Jody Dallaire and Jennifer Richard
Co-chairs, New Brunswick Women's Council*

**Co-chairs at the time of publication of this report*

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The New Brunswick Women’s Council
is New Brunswick’s independent advisory body on women’s equality issues.

551 King Street – Suite 103
PO 6000, Fredericton NB E3B 5H1

506-462-5179 / Toll-free: 1-844-462-5179
Fax: 506-462-5069

council@gnb.ca | nbwomenscouncil.ca

2017–2018 in New Brunswick

April 2017

- Government announces \$1 million investment in its Early Learning and Child Care Trust Fund.

May 2017

- The *Political Process Financing Act* is amended to include financial incentives for parties to recruit and support women candidates.
- The Family Plan report on advancing women's equality is released.
- Amendments to the *Human Rights Act* that add gender identity and/or expression and family status as prohibited grounds for discrimination come into force.
- The *New Brunswick Women's Council Act* is proclaimed and comes into force.
- *The 2016 Equality Profile* (a biennial statistical report on women's equality produced by the Women's Equality Branch) is published.
- An Aboriginal Domestic Violence Outreach Program launches in three First Nations communities as part of a five-year pilot.

June 2017

- Appointments made to the provincial court create gender parity among its full-time judges for the first time; Chief Judge Jolène Richard becomes the first woman to preside over the court.
- Pay equity adjustments are approved for three public sector employee groups: professional support workers in schools, specialized health care professionals, and medical science professionals.

July 2017

- Government releases a gender-based analysis tool to the public.
- Government launches a program to provide Mifegymiso to those with valid New Brunswick Medicare cards free of charge.

October 2017

- The first registered midwives in the provincial healthcare system start accepting clients in the Fredericton area.
- Government announces that it intends to update regulations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to include violence as a workplace hazard.
- Government reports that it is on track to ensure that all seven eligible provincial Crown corporations achieve compliance with the *Pay Equity Act, 2009* by March 2018 and that three are currently compliant.

November 2017

- Government announces that the implementation of measures under the *Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act* will be supported by a \$900 000 investment.
- New Brunswick's Public Prosecution Services establishes a new unit dedicated to prosecuting criminal offences involving domestic and intimate partner violence with government funding.

December 2017

- Government releases an initial review of RCMP and municipal policing forces' handling of sexual violence cases and announces it has established a stakeholder group to examine opportunities to improve how police forces respond to sexual crime cases.

January 2018

- Government releases its Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan.

February 2018

- The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls holds a community hearing in Moncton.

March 2018

- The *Employment Standards Act* is amended to include leaves in instances of domestic, intimate partner, and sexual violence as well as provide job protection for those who leave work to care for a family member (leaves are not immediately available as relevant regulations must be developed).
- The *Insurance Act* is amended to protect innocent co-insureds on home insurance policies in cases of intimate partner violence involving property damage.
- A progress report on *Overcoming Poverty Together: The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Plan 2014-2019* is published.
- Government announces \$12 million to provide an increase to the hourly wages (ranging from 25 cents to \$1) to approximately 10 000 human service workers in New Brunswick starting April 1.
- Legislature adds “Statement on Roles and Responsibilities and Code of Conduct for Members of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick” to the Standing Rules of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick.

**This timeline is not exhaustive and largely excludes programmatic investments unless they are for entirely new services. In instances in which new programs are committed to and implemented in the same year, only the date of implementation is noted. Where a bill is introduced and becomes law in the same fiscal year, only the date it becomes law and/or comes into force is included. Funding announcements made at the end of 2017-2018 for the 2018-2019 budget are not included.*

Message from the Co-chairs



Throughout 2017- 2018, the council continued to evolve into a fully operational independent public advisory body. A critical step in this process was the proclamation of the the *New Brunswick Women's Council Act* in May 2017. With proclamation, the act came into force and the council finally became truly independent.

During the year, the council provided advice and public commentary on issues of relevance to women's equality with more frequency than in previous years. A number of important legislative gains were made on women's equality, notably on gender-based

violence and changes to public funding of political parties to encourage them to recruit and support more women candidates. There were also gains in health care. New Brunswick was the first province to commit to publicly funding prescriptions for Mifegymiso (the drug used in non-surgical abortions) and the province also finally saw a midwifery demonstration site begin accepting patients. A plan for increased public investment in early learning and childcare was unveiled.

The council also prioritized grassroots engagement. Through our Resonate initiative, we focused on hearing directly from women about what issues that were affecting their lives and needed to be addressed to improve the lives of women in the province as a group. In Resonate, we also explicitly created space to listen to trans and non-binary individuals of all genders. In doing this work, we ensured that we provided individuals with opportunities to share their stories, priorities, and ideas in their own words. We also collected information from organizations that serve, support, and advocate for women. Ultimately, we heard from more than 1,400 individuals and 35 organizations and initiatives in New Brunswick.

Finally, the council continued to build a foundation of strong internal governance. This work included council meetings, committee engagement, and the development of internal guiding documents and policies.

You can learn about this work, and more, throughout this report. We are pleased to share with you what the council accomplished in 2017-2018.

Jody Dallaire and Jennifer Richard
Co-chairs, New Brunswick Women's Council*

**Co-chairs at the time of publication of this report*

Members and staff

Members

2017–2018 membership

Organizations

- CBDC New Brunswick (represented by Line Doiron)
- Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre (represented by Jennifer Richard)
- Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre (represented by Rina Arseneault)
- New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council (represented by Wendy Wetteland)
- New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity (represented by Jody Dallaire)
- New Brunswick Multicultural Council (represented by Madhu Verma)
- Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick (represented by Lyne Chantal Boudreau)
- Saint John Women's Empowerment Network (represented by Joanne Britton)
- YWCA Moncton (represented by Jewell Mitchell)

Individuals

- Martine Marchand
- Patricia Morris
- Madeleine Nickerson
- Noëlla Richard
- Louisa Seales
- Constance Sewell
- Paulette Sonier Rioux
- Phylomène Zangio

Ex officio

- Jocelyne Mills, assistant deputy minister, Women's Equality Branch
- Beth Lyons, executive director, New Brunswick Women's Council

Notes on the 2017-2018 membership

In May 2017, Jewell Mitchell succeeded Jennifer Richard as the council's primarily English-speaking co-chair. She and Jody Dallaire served as co-chairs for the remainder of 2017-2018. Insofar as their co-chairing responsibilities are concerned, they held the position as individuals and not on behalf of the organizations they represented.

During 2017-2018, the terms of the Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre, the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre, and Phylomène Zangio ended. The Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre was appointed for a second term and the New Brunswick Aboriginal People's Council, Martine Marchand, Patricia Morris, and Louisa Seales were appointed for the first time. These changes came into effect in January 2018.

Staff

The council continued to operate with a small staff team throughout 2017-2018.

- Beth Lyons – Executive Director
- Linda Landry-Guimond – Office Manager
- Erin Whitmore – Researcher and Policy Analyst (until March 2018)
- Brit Mockler – Public Engagement Officer (until March 2018)

The council's work is directed by its volunteer membership, which includes organizations (represented by a woman staff member or volunteer) and individual women committed to women's equality. Members shape the council's issue-based work by collaborating with staff to identify and analyze priority issues and propose solutions. Members also ensure that the voices of women from diverse identities, communities, and experiences are represented within the council. The membership also has a governance role that includes developing policies to direct the council's operations at a high level.

Issues

Human Rights Act

Updates to the province's *Human Rights Act* that were made in 2016-2017 came into force in 2017-2018. The changes added gender identity or expression and family status to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination and modernized language on disability. The council reiterated that it welcomed the changes and highlighted that they did not include a rigid definition of family and instead left the concept open to interpretation based on emerging legal precedent.

Women in politics

Changes to the *Political Process Financing Act* that were introduced in 2016-2017 became law in 2017-2018. The council supported the changes, which were in response to recommendations from the Electoral Reform Commission and introduced a financial incentive for parties to support women candidates in provincial elections. Under the act, political parties receive public funding according to the proportion of votes their candidates received in the previous provincial election. With the new incentive, votes received by women candidates are weighted at 1.5 times those received by men in funding calculations.

The council denounced a partisan political flyer that was posted throughout Moncton as misogynist and harmful to the democracy of the province; the council also asked the leaders of all political parties in the province to do the same. The flyer featured a cartoon of two candidates in the provincial election (including the Minister of Finance at the time). Hundreds of copies of the flyer were posted throughout Moncton, including near the homes of both candidates and the school attended by the child of one of the candidates.



Gender-based analysis in government decision-making

The council commended the government for publicly releasing a gender-based analysis (GBA) tool used to identify and address potential gender-based impacts of initiatives being developed. The council also recommended next steps for releasing additional information, including:

- sharing when GBA is used in government decision-making and when a decision may be exempted from requiring GBA;
- sharing what steps GNB has taken to support GBA, including how many civil servants are trained in the tool; and
- making information generated by GBA processes public, particularly for significant announcements like Throne Speeches and budgets as well as initiatives involving consultation with citizens.

Reproductive health

The council applauded the implementation of a program to provide Mifegymiso (the prescription used in non-surgical abortions) free of charge to those with a valid New Brunswick Medicare card. New Brunswick was the first jurisdiction in Canada to commit to providing publicly funded access to Mifegymiso. The council recommended that government identify and address potential gaps in coverage (including coverage for newcomers and students from other provinces and territories who may not have Medicare cards). The council also advised government to ensure that patients seeking medical abortion are able to access ultrasounds in a timely manner and that that physicians are able to bill Medicare easily and appropriately for Mifegymiso-related services.

The council also advised government that the province needs expanded regional access to surgical abortion.

Violence as a workplace hazard

The council supported government's decision to amend regulations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to include violence as a workplace hazard. The council advised government that an implementation plan to support the integration of these changes in New Brunswick workplaces would be required. This would include ensuring that WorkSafeNB and employers are provided with adequate support in order to implement required changes, as well as public education to address societal attitudes that too often regard violence as simply part of the job. Draft regulations were not published in this year.

Protecting innocent co-insureds

The Insurance Act was amended to address exclusionary clauses within policies that may prevent payment if the loss or damage to property is caused by any intentional or criminal act and by any person insured under the policy. The amendments protect innocent co-insureds on home insurance policies in cases of intimate partner violence involving property damage. The council supported this change and also advised government that further work would be needed to ensure that investigations into claims recognize the unique dynamics of intimate partner violence and the complexities around coercion and the effects of trauma.

Prosecution of criminal offenses involving domestic and intimate partner violence

The council expressed support for Public Prosecutions Services' decision to create a new unit dedicated to prosecuting criminal offenses involving domestic and intimate partner violence. The council also recognized government's decision to fund this unit.

Employment Standards Act

The Employment Standards Act was updated to create a new leave for employees in situations of domestic, intimate partner, and sexual violence and to provide job protection for people who leave work to care for a family member. The leaves did not become available in 2017-2018 as related regulations needed to be developed.



When first announced by government, the new violence leave only included domestic and intimate partner violence. While the council welcomed this news, it advised government to broaden the leave to include gender-based violence that is committed outside of the context of current or former domestic or intimate relationships (e.g. sexual violence perpetrated by acquaintances or strangers). Government ultimately introduced legislation that included domestic, intimate partner, and sexual violence.

The council also advised government to provide the public with an update on the outcomes of its 2016 public consultation on amending the *Employment Standards Act* so that domestic and other workers employed in a private home would no longer be exempted from the act's protections.

Conduct in the legislative assembly

In response to a government media release detailing measures it had and would continue to take to prevent workplace violence and harassment, the council advised government to publicly clarify what policies and accompanying processes members of the legislative assembly, political staffers, and staff within the legislative assembly must adhere to and may turn to for support in regard to harassment and violence in their workplace. At that time, the council also advised government to provide the public with an update on the development of a code of conduct for members of the legislative assembly (as promised in government's response to the 2017 recommendations of the Commission on Electoral Reform) and to address whether or not gender-based analysis has been used in this work.

Later in the year, an allegation of harassment was made against the Speaker of the House and the legislative assembly later adopted a code of conduct that included brief reference to harassment. No information on whether gender-based analysis was used in the development of the code of conduct was made available.

Sexual violence at post-secondary education institutions

In response to an opposition motion, the council advised the government to consider legislation requiring post-secondary education institutions to develop stand-alone policies to address sexual violence on campus. The council also recommended that exploration of such legislation should involve rigorous and comprehensive consultation with stakeholders, including university and college students, staff, administrators, and community-based organizations with on-the-ground expertise in sexual violence.

Police response to reports of sexual violence

The council welcomed government's public release of an initial review of RCMP and municipal policing forces handling of sexual violence incidents reported in New Brunswick and deemed unfounded. The council was also pleased with government's public commitment to further action, including creating a stakeholder group convened by the Department of Justice and Public Safety to examine opportunities to improve how police forces respond to sexual crime cases. The council is a member of this stakeholder group.

Child Care

In August, the government announced it had signed a three-year, bilateral early learning and child care agreement with the federal government. . Under the agreement, the federal and provincial governments will invest approximately \$30 million and \$41 million respectively to improve early learning and child care for preschool-aged children in the province. After the August announcement, government made a number of piecemeal announcements on details of the investments leading to the release of a comprehensive plan in January, *Everyone at their best... from the start: Early Learning and Child Care Action Plan*.

The council welcomed the action plan and flagged a few areas of concern, including:

- ensuring equitable roll out of early learning centre designations created under the plan;
- that the cost of care for school-aged children is not included in calculations for subsidies and caps on fees (while funding for care for school-aged children was outside of the scope of the bilateral agreement, the cost of this care for families could still be considered in calculating subsidies and fee caps relating to costs for pre-school age children);
- the lack of incentives for the creation of spaces for the youngest group of infants; and
- the need to move toward a non-profit governance model.

In December, government announced that it would invest \$28 million over four years into wage increases for trained early childhood educators. The council commended government for recognizing that wages in the sector must be addressed in order to move child care forward, but noted that the increases announced by government would ensure that in 2022-2023 early learning and child care educators in New Brunswick will have wages just above the 2017 Canadian average for the sector – and these wages would be about a dollar less than what equitable pay for this work looked like in 2012 according to the New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity. Additionally, as this announcement was outside the scope of the action plan it was functionally a platform commitment for the upcoming 2018 provincial election.

Family Plan

In June 2017, government finished releasing the various pillars of its Family Plan, including a pillar on Women's Equality (these pillars were based on consultations on the Family Plan framework document government had released the previous year). In response, the council recommended that government further develop a number of action items in the plan, including pay equity within the private sector and improving access to affordable, quality child care. The council also advised government that the plan's commitment to increasing home- and community-based health and senior care in New Brunswick must address the challenging conditions that paid care providers face including low pay and precarious working conditions.



Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act

The Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act became law in 2016-2017 but would not come into force until 2018-2019. During 2017-2018, however, necessary amendments were made to the *Judicature Act* to allow for the appointment of Emergency Adjudicative Officers, which are part of the process involved in obtaining emergency intervention orders under *Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act*. Government also announced that the implementation of measures under the *Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Act* would be supported by a \$900 000 investment.

Public engagement

When the council finally became fully independent and operational in 2017-2018, its leading priority was grassroots engagement.

The council wanted to hear about issues affecting women's equality in New Brunswick directly from women and organizations in the province. While the main focus was women, the council also wanted to make space to hear from individuals belonging to all gender minorities, including those who aren't women. The public engagement initiative that emerged from this was called Resonate.

One of Resonate's objectives was a report-back on what the council heard. This report-back would inform the council's work moving forward, including helping to identify priorities areas for attention and develop recommendations to government. The report-back would also be submitted to government and be made publicly available as a resource.

On gender diversity

Gender minorities include individuals who are trans, non-binary, agender, genderqueer, Two-Spirit, and much more. Some individuals, like trans women, are both women and gender minorities.

Individuals who belong to gender minorities, whether or not they are women, face challenges that are rooted in gender-based inequality. That's why Resonate was open to – and strengthened by – the participation of all gender minorities.

To facilitate this work, the council offered two versions of our online survey: one with women-focused language and one with language that was gender inclusive. Individuals could fill in whichever version of the survey they were comfortable with.



Data collection occurred between October 2017 and February 2018 in three ways:

- an online survey;
- a limited number of discussion groups with women (intended to enhance data collection by engaging with demographics of women who were less likely to complete the online survey); and
- a day with organizations and initiatives.

Data collection was guided by commitments to:

- making as few assumptions as possible;
- collecting demographic and qualitative data;
- asking participants to tell us about their own lived experiences as well as their concerns for women and/or individuals belonging to gender minorities as a broader group;
- encouraging participants to share in their own words and at their own comfort level;
- learning about challenges as well as potential solutions and positive experiences
- making space for experiences and concerns that are also shaped by race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, income, etc.; and
- providing participants with information on how we would use, store and protect their data.

Responses from more than 1,400 individuals and more than 35 organizations and initiatives were analyzed. While the results of Resonate were not released in the 2017-2018 fiscal year, they are now available at www.resonatenbresonances.ca

Partners on this initiative were Beam Diversity Consulting, Bitfox Consulting, Forté Communications, Han Martin Associates, and Polygon Graphics.

Meetings and committees

Meetings

Members are engaged year-round in the work of the council via regular email communications and committee work. They also meet multiple times a year in-person and via teleconference. In-person meetings allow members to discuss issues and develop policy positions in real-time, as well as provide opportunities to connect with communities in the province.

In 2017–2018, the council held four meetings:

- Tracadie, April;
- Fredericton, November;
- Dieppe, March; and
- Conference call, March.

Minutes for all meetings (excepting those portions or entire meetings that are in camera) are available on the council's website at nbwomenscouncil.ca or by contacting the council.

Committees

The council uses standing and ad hoc committees to advance various pieces of work between meetings and ensure accountability. Staff and members sit on committees; special contributors may be invited to join as well. In 2017–2018, the following committees were active:

- Finance (standing);
- Governance (standing);
- Issues advisory (standing); and
- Membership recommendation (ad hoc).

Governance

New Brunswick Women's Council Act

In May 2017, the *New Brunswick Women's Council Act* was proclaimed and came into force. By-laws that the council had prepared and submitted to government in the previous year also came into force when the act was proclaimed.

The act arose from the council's request for legislation to enshrine its mandate and independence and to address administrative challenges that were preventing it from becoming fully operational.

The act defines the council as a body for study and consultation with the following objectives:

- A. to be an independent body that provides advice to the Minister on matters of importance to women and their substantive equality;
- B. to bring to the attention of government and the public issues of interest and concern to women and their substantive equality;
- C. to include and engage women of diverse identities, experiences and communities, women's groups and society in general;
- D. to be strategic and provide advice on emerging and future issues; and
- E. to represent New Brunswick women.

Mission & Vision

Mission

To further gender equity in New Brunswick by strategically addressing ongoing and emerging issues through research, informed and committed membership, and engagement with government and the public.

Vision

A diverse and inclusive New Brunswick of real and deeply-rooted gender equity.

Strategic directions

Become a leading voice on issues of importance to women and relating to gender-equality in New Brunswick.

- Establish clear positions and, where appropriate, recommendations on key issues.
- Become a leading resource for research, analysis, commentary, and recommendations.
- Be able to identify and respond nimbly to emerging issues and opportunities.

Be engaged with and informed by the women of New Brunswick in their full diversity.

- Membership and analysis reflect the diversity of women's identities, experiences, and communities.
- Provide opportunities for women to identify and share priorities, needs, and solutions.
- Build connections with equality-seeking and women-focused groups throughout all regions.

Develop robust membership and internal processes centred on consensus-building and anti-oppression.

- Foster a committed membership in which members experience solidarity, trust, and respect with one another.
- Develop policies and processes that are sound, equitable, and reduce barriers to participation.

Advocate, educate and partner strategically.

- Focus on systems-level change.
- Take a collective impact approach.
- Identify strategic roles for the council given its unique mandate, resources, and relationship to government.

Late in 2017-2018, the council decided to extend its existing strategic directions until 2020.

Operating standards

The council's operating standards address:

- mandate, mission, and vision;
- interface with the government;
- membership;
- co-chairs;
- meetings;
- decision-making;
- role and accountability of the executive director;
- financial management;
- language;
- research, projects, initiatives, and ongoing work; and
- external engagement.

In instances in which government already has a policy addressing a topic included in the standards, the standards reflect the policy and provide further direction.

During 2017-2018, the council adopted updated standards that had been prepared the preceding year. The updates better aligned the standards with the New Brunswick Women's Council Act and reflected evolutions in the council's ways of working.

As the standards are fairly high-level, they call for the development of accompanying policies and guiding documents with further details. During 2017-2018, the council updated internal policies on member reimbursements and updated the guiding document on membership (this included adding sections on the role of co-chairs and a council-led strategy for calls for membership).

The standards also call for a memorandum of understanding between the council and government. Work on this document began in the previous year, and it was signed in November 2017.

At the end of the year, the council reviewed its compliance with the operating standards to identify areas that required attention as well as further changes needed to the standards to better reflect the council's ways of working.

Membership call

Early in 2017-2018, the council held a call for membership. With the support of Executive Council Office, the council prepared and executed the call. The council received all expressions of interest directly and delegated their review to a committee comprised of a co-chair (Jewell Mitchell), two council members (Line Doiron and Phylomène Zangio), and two external members (Amanda LeBlanc and Adrienne O'Pray). The executive director served as an ex-officio member. In addition to the strength of applications, the committee considered the following when reviewing submissions:

- that the council's membership is intended to be primarily composed of organizations; and
- the current composition of the council's membership and whether an applicant's addition to it would contribute to linguistic and regional balance and/or enhance representation of voices from marginalized identities, experiences, and communities.

The committee provided its recommendations to the Women's Equality Branch in May 2017 and appointments were made in January 2018.

Finances

Expenditure status report by primary fiscal year ending March 31, 2018		
	Budget (\$)	Actual (\$)
Personal services	296,410.00	266,992.87
Other services	122,744.00	97,835.23
Materials and supplies	3,500.00	2,442.85
Property and equipment	750.00	1,472.36
Contributions and grants	–	–
TOTAL	423,404.00	368,743.31