

— 2023–2024



ANNUAL **REPORT**

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

About the Cover



Detail of “Unity Quilt”

2020

Quilted by Liz Dempsey,
from a design by Bonnie Hunter

Quilter Liz Dempsey is the owner/operator of Blueberry Cove LongArm Quilting Studio, Newport, PEI.

“Unity Quilt” was an online quilt begun during the beginning of COVID, when the world was shut down. Liz Dempsey says, “I chose bright colours for my version of Bonnie Hunter’s design. The bright colours made me smile and kept me at peace while I was piecing this quilt.”

“Unity Quilt” was published in the book *Prince Edward Island, Quilts of Covid* and in 2023 was part of the exhibition “Quilts of Covid” at the Eptek Centre in Summerside, PEI.

Visiting this exhibit in Summerside was a highlight of Chairperson-staff team-building day for the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 2023.

Chairperson's Message

Dear Minister Redmond:

I am pleased to present you with the 2023–2024 Annual Report of the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women. The Annual Report contains a summary of the Advisory Council's activities, publications, projects, and collaborations with government and community from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024. Our final financial statements for this period will be audited with those of the next period and will be included under the cover of the next Annual Report to December 31, 2024.



This year, we have continued to work following our strategic plan for 2022–2024. I am pleased with Council members' progress to achieve the goals we set out in this plan, and I am particularly pleased that an increased grant allowed us to increase staff capacity for the first time in almost twenty years. I was also happy to be part of the hiring committee for our new part-time Research Coordinator, Trish Altass. Trish brings a strong research capability in social sciences, strong community connections, and excellent community advocacy skills.

Serena Smith

Chairperson

Some highlights from 2023–2024 included these:

- Co-organizing and co-hosting the Creating Collective Care conference in Summerside in February to bring together the community sector and consider caregiving at the individual and collective levels.
- Helping with the public release of a proposal by Coalition Canada for a guaranteed basic income program for all of PEI that could be scaled up to all of Canada.
- Visible presence at PRIDE events and ongoing support and allyship with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, in a year where there were disturbing protests against the human right to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.
- The Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence Against Women, on the theme "Healing Gender-Based Violence Begins Here," with the Montreal Massacre Memorial Service in person on December 6.
- The opportunity to work on PEI's goals under the bilateral federal-provincial agreement for a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, with a study group on Women Talking and groundwork for an exciting project working with municipalities, beginning with Kensington.
- We closed out the year with celebration, by collaborating with other women's and community organizations and unions to gather for International Women's Day, March 8.



Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Hon. Natalie Jameson and Chairperson Serena Smith.



Michelle Jay, Becky Tramley, Serena Smith, and Jane Ledwell on a Chair-Staff team-building day in Summerside in summer 2023.

Following the April provincial election, the Council was pleased to continue our relationship with you as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. We were also pleased to be continued to be called on to advise government in consultation processes, including participating in pre-budget consultations, and as a focus group for consultations on access to contraception.

During this term, Council also worked hard to develop and finalize the assessment model for the 2026 Equality Report Card, and we were pleased to present this to you in February.

The Advisory Council continues to play an important role in both community and government-supported initiatives, especially with community groups actively working on eliminating poverty, ending gender-based violence, supporting caregivers, and improving mental and physical health and well-being. Thank you to the projects, networks, and coalitions that welcome our participation.

None of this is possible without the dedicated and knowledgeable staff. On behalf of Council, I would like to thank Jane, Michelle, Becky, and Trish.

As we present this report to you, Minister Redmond, following the completion of financial statements, my term will be ended. I thank Minister Jameson for her engagement and her genuine commitment to advancing justice and equality for all women in her role as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in 2023 and 2024. Minister Redmond, I look forward to the Council continuing to advance gender equality with you in the coming year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SS' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Serena Smith,
Chairperson

About the Advisory Council

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PEIACSW) is an arm's-length government-appointed Council. Nine Council members are selected from among Island women who have demonstrated a commitment to women's equality and who represent regional, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

The Advisory Council began in 1975 as a Minute-in-Council. In 1988, it received full legislative standing with the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act. This Act continues to govern the Council's structure and mandate.



Quillwork: "Ma'kit," by Melissa Peter Paul

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is committed to working with feminist principles and process.

We acknowledge all women-identifying people in our understanding of "women," including cis women, trans women, and gender minorities.

The work of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women takes place on the island district of Epekwitk in Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq, their home today and for more than 12,000 years. Epekwitk is covered by the historic treaties of Peace and Friendship.

Our Core Purpose

We are a catalyst and collective voice for equity, passionate about advancing women's equality, health and wellbeing, and full participation in the social, cultural, economic, and political life in PEI through

- Public policy analysis and advice
- Advocacy and public education
- Research and consultation
- Remembering and celebrating women

Our Vision

Gender equality for all Islanders

Our Values

- Respect
- Love and Compassion
- Inclusiveness
- Integrity



Serena Smith, Summerside

Chairperson 2023-01-24 to 2024-11-01

Vice-Chair 2021-03-30 to 2023-01-23

Member 2019-10-29 to 2024-11-01

Serena Smith is originally from PEI but grew up across Canada. She returned to PEI to begin her career as a lawyer with Cox & Palmer in the Summerside office. Prior to law school she completed a social work and joint history and political science undergrad degree. Serena is passionate about social entrepreneurship and the equality of women and marginalized groups, which is reflected in her various volunteer positions. In addition to her work on the Advisory Council, she currently serves on the Board of the PEI Literacy Alliance, volunteers with the PEI Business Women's Association, and is active with the Canadian Bar Association (provincial women's forum Chair) and Law Society (Chair of the health and wellness committee).



Garima Mishra, Charlottetown

Vice-Chair 2023-01-24 to 2026-03-30

Member 2021-03-30 to 2024-03-30

Garima Mishra was born and raised in India and moved with her husband to Canada and PEI in 2017. An Engineer by qualification and with 14+ years of experience in the IT industry, Garima is currently working with the Government of PEI as a Project Manager. Garima feels fortunate to be living in PEI and to raise their daughter, Eliana, around the diverse communities here. She strongly believes that we all can progress and succeed together if we enable and support each other. Garima is excited to contribute by being a part of this Council. She is delighted to be part of this esteemed group of women who are striving to make our society a happier, more equitable place.



Serena Smith welcomes new member Soleil Hutchinson to the Council table.



Garima Mishra chaired the September meeting in Victoria-by-the-Sea.



Emily Rutledge, Charlottetown

Treasurer 2023-01-24 to 2024-11-01

Member 2019-10-29 to 2024-11-01

Emily Rutledge is a single mom who works outside the home as a Counselling Therapist. She has lived in the Maritimes most of her adult life. Originally from Toronto, she moved to Halifax to study art and continued further east to complete a psychology undergrad at UPEI. After completing a masters in community psychology and another in counselling, she is now happy to call PEI home. Working in counselling has afforded her the opportunity to be an ear to the realities those who live here face on a daily basis. She is passionate about supporting mental health and equality for all who make the island their home.



Hsiao-Yu (Kathren) Liu, Charlottetown

Member 2023-01-24 to 2026-01-24

Originally from Taiwan, Hsiao-Yu Liu and her family immigrated to Canada in 2007. She gained additional Bachelor and Master degrees from UPEI, and became an educator for Island public schools, UPEI, and Holland College. She has also instructed at the Community Mental Health Association (CMHA). Hsiao-Yu has been a volunteer with Immigrant Refugee Services Association (IRSA), and the PEI Action Team for Migrant Workers. Her thesis and joint research projects considered the opportunities for diversity communities in PEI, through which Hsiao-Yu realized there is much to be done in Atlantic Canada to address issues rooted in gender inequality, racial discrimination and international migration.



Emily moderating a panel at the Creating Collective Care conference.



IWD co-organizer Hsiao-Yu (right) presents Min. Jameson with a gift.



Gaylene Carragher, Stanhope

Member 2019-10-29 to 2024-11-01

Gaylene Carragher is very honoured and excited to be working as a member of council. She is a mother to three, is married, and lives in Stanhope. She has worked at Holland College for more than 25 years and has taught sessionally at UPEI for fourteen years. She is currently the Director of Retention, Part-time Studies & Career Services at Holland College. Gaylene's educational background includes an MEd, an MBA, and a diploma in human resources—she is a committed lifelong learner!



Regina (Gina) Younker, Charlottetown

Member 2019-02-19 to 2024-03-29

Gina Younker is an Islander by choice; she has lived in PEI for over 30 years and is proud to have recently become a Canadian citizen! She is a local anti-poverty advocate who is passionate about improving choices for women, mothers, and children experiencing poverty. Gina has been involved with the Adventure Group, and Women's Network PEI (specifically the Paths to Prosperity project). Currently, she represents PEI as a board member of the national anti-poverty organization Canada Without Poverty. Gina also serves on PEI's Poverty Reduction Advisory Council in addition to her appointment as an ACSW member, and she previously served on the provincial housing council. Gina lives in Charlottetown with her cockapoo, Oliver. She is the proud mother of three grown children and grandmother to Savannah, Spencer, Stella, and Roy.



Gaylene and Barb at Council's Halloween-themed retreat.



Gina receives her 5-year Service Award from Serena after her last meeting.



Caroline MacRae, Summerside

Member 2019-02-19 to 2024-03-29

Caroline MacRae grew up in Charlottetown and spent several years teaching overseas in South Korea and Guyana. Within Canada she has worked on a youth advocacy project through the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre and Sexual Assault Services Association, as well as nursing at a remote hospital in Haida Gwaii, BC. She is currently enrolled in the Masters of Nursing-Nurse Practitioner program at UPEI, and works as a Registered Nurse in Summerside. In addition to her work on the Advisory Council, she serves on the boards of PEI Family Violence Prevention Services and the PEI Coalition for Women in Government.



Caroline receiving her 5-year Service Award from Serena at her last meeting.



Barb McDowall, Charlottetown

Member 2019-10-29 to 2024-11-01

Barb McDowall has been an active member on Council for almost five years. She is grateful for the opportunities offered by its advisory nature, enhanced by the wisdom and lived experience of the rich and diverse group of women on Council of all ages, in effecting change in ending gender-based violence in all its forms on PEI. Barb has had lots of fun contributing her unique passion and skills to this important work.



Barb in yellow at the Council retreat, showing her joy of being in community.



Marie-Soleil Hutchinson

Member 2023-10-31 to 2026-10-31

Soleil Hutchinson is a queer organic farmer on the Island. She and her wife Lauren are co-owner/operators of Soleil's Farm, a 7 acre vegetable farm which they run alongside their amazing farm crew. Soleil is dedicated to providing her community with the freshest, tastiest, local organic vegetables, supplying over 30 Island restaurants and stores as well as 200 families through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and Food Security Program. Soleil is also a founding member and the current chair of Grower Station, PEI's farmer-led local food hub, an organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for small scale farmers. In recent years, she has been awarded PEI's Agriculture Employer of the Year, the Gordon & Sandra Sobey Award for Outstanding Effort for Agriculture Awareness, and the Women in Agriculture Recognition Award. Soleil chose the wild, unpredictable life of a farmer because above all else, she believes in the power of community—that together, a community of committed farmers and eaters can create a better food system, where we can all celebrate and enjoy good food.

COUNCIL STAFF

Jane Ledwell - Executive Director

Jane joined Council staff in June 2004 and has been Executive Director since September 2012 and works full time. Jane grew up in rural PEI and studied English literature at Mt. Allison University in New Brunswick, where she got a BA, and the University of Waikato in New Zealand, where she got an MPhil. A writer and editor in her spare time, she has published three books of poetry and has contributed to a number of other books, with a special focus on historical women writers connected to PEI. Jane lives in Charlottetown with her family.

Training Highlight: Working with consultant Sari LaBelle to wrap up the 2022 to 2024 strategic plan was hands-on training in strategic planning.



Michelle Jay - Program Coordinator

Michelle has been Council's Program Coordinator since September 2012 and works full time. She is a proud Mom, a proud lesbian, and a proud social justice activist. Michelle has identified as a feminist and an advocate for racial and cultural inclusion since her teen years, since growing up in Indigenous communities in Manitoba and Zambia and volunteering with refugees in Guatemala and Mexico. Her formal post-secondary education was from Mt. Allison University and UPEI, where she eventually received a BA in Psychology. She has called PEI home with varying degrees of (dis)comfort since the mid-1980s. Michelle lives with her daughter in Charlottetown.

Training Highlight: In 2024, Michelle began a five-month "Facilitator's Path" training with Paula Gallant.



Trish Altass - Research Coordinator

Trish has been Council's Research Coordinator since September 2023 and works part time. Trish is also a partner at Leading Impact Consulting Inc. and a sessional instructor at UPEI in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Trish has a strong background in qualitative and community-based research, and as a former PEI MLA has first-hand experience in policy and legislation development. She holds a Master's degree in Sociology with a focus on critical and feminist theories. Her research work has spanned areas of work and labour, education, and poverty elimination. She lives in Summerside with her partner, their child, and their pet dog, and rabbit.

Training Highlight: In 2024, Trish began courses in Evaluation Essential Skills with the Canadian Evaluation Society.



Becky Tramley - Office Manager

Becky joined Council staff full-time in October 1986 and has worked part time since 1993. She has served in a number of administrative roles over more than thirty-five years and is the Council's living institutional memory. Currently, she is in the role of Office Manager. Becky grew up in Nova Scotia and PEI and is the youngest of seven children brought up in a mother-led family. Her studies have included attendance at UPEI and Holland College. She lives in Charlottetown with her husband and two cats.

Training Highlight: This year, Becky took part in additional training on the Province's records management system.



Council Meetings

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is mandated to meet at least four times per year. At meetings, Council members share experiences, knowledge, and understanding of issues. They discuss and decide on policy priorities and recommendations to government. They meet with government officials or community organizations. They invite resource people who offer opportunities for learning and analysis. Council sets strategic planning objectives in an interest-based, collaborative, and consultative process, with expert facilitation whenever this is possible.

● **188th MEETING: MAY 26, 2023**

Strategic Planning, Summerside

The beautiful Lefurgey Cultural Centre played host to Council members for a meeting on the first anniversary of the two-year strategic plan. Council worked with consultant Anna Keenan to develop strategic goals and action plans for the Purple Ribbon Campaign and work on gender-based violence.

● **189th MEETING: SEPT. 23, 2023**

Welcome to New Staff, Victoria-by-the-Sea

Council met at the historic schoolhouse in Victoria-by-the-Sea and welcomed new staffperson, Research Coordinator Trish Altass. Council members checked in on progress on strategic planning and put a focus on supports for caregivers and caregiving: a roundtable discussion brought to light caregiver experiences and needs. Members continued work on the 2026 Equality Report Card assessment model.

● **190th MEETING: OCT. 30, 2023**

Council Retreat, Brackley

Council's fall retreat was Halloween-themed for the season. Members took part in a workshop to develop category statements for the 2026 Equality Report Card assessment model and looked at priority aspirations, inspirations, and celebrations in advance of our upcoming 50th anniversary, in 2025.



At Council's January meeting with Minister Jameson, back row, left to right, Garima Mishra, Michelle Harris Genge (Interministerial Women's Secretariat), Serena Smith, Min. Natalie Jameson, Gaylene Carragher, Caroline MacRae, Gina Younker; front row, left to right, Soleil Hutchinson, Emily Rutledge, Hsiao-Yu Liu, and Barb McDowall.

● 191st MEETING: DEC. 6, 2023

Montreal Massacre Memorial, Charlottetown

Council members welcomed new member Soleil Hutchinson to her first meeting. All members assisted with the always powerful Montreal Massacre Memorial Service. Council also followed up on topics of continued interest.

● 192nd MEETING: JAN. 24, 2024

Meeting with the Minister, Charlottetown

Council members welcomed Hon. Natalie Jameson, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and Michelle Harris-Genge, Director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, for lunch. In the afternoon, members served as a focus group regarding access to contraception and finalized the content of the assessment model for the 2026 Equality Report Card.

● 193rd MEETING: MARCH 14, 2024

Women Talking, Kensington

Council members participated in a wrap-up of the 2022-2024 strategic plan, led by consultant Sari LaBelle. Members took part in a talking circle about gender-based violence, inspired by Miriam Toews's novel, *Women Talking*. Caroline MacRae and Gina Younker received service awards at their final meeting.



Between meetings, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women continues to advise government and educate the public using consensus-building processes. An important government consultation Council members turned their attention to was the provincial pre-budget consultation. Between December 8 and 14, Council members participated in an online survey to share their ideas and priorities for the budget submission. Council members also had the opportunity to provide their input during a Zoom meeting and through email. A council representative participated in one of the Province's virtual consultations (December 18) and took advantage of the opportunity to share the main themes of our submission. Our written submission (December 22) emphasized the four priority areas for advocacy in our strategic plan.

MEETINGS WITH THE MINISTER

Hon. Natalie Jameson, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

The Council Chairperson leads the Council's relationship with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. Chairperson Serena Smith met with Minister Responsible Hon. Natalie Jameson twice and provided advice to government in correspondence on a number of priority topics. Min. Jameson met with Council as a whole on January 24.



Minister Natalie Jameson (left) and Chairperson Serena Smith (right), meeting in November 2023.

July 25: Chair Meeting

Topics included thanks for enhanced funding, Council vacancies, politicians' participation in the PRIDE parade, the Purple Ribbon Campaign, the Creating Collective Care conference, the next Equality Report Card, recent consultations, future audits of Council, and emerging issues from community.

November 1: Chair Meeting

Topics included paid sick leave, sexist comments by an MLA, the proposal for Basic Income Guarantee for PEI, the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence and declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic, standing up against attacks on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, recent consultations, and updates on topics from the last meeting.

Correspondence

April 5 & 24, 2023: Letters of Congratulations

A letter of congratulations to Premier King following his re-election advocated swift appointment of a Minister Responsible for the Status of Women; and, following re-appointment of Hon. Natalie Jameson, another letter of congratulations also advocated an equality-focused public ministerial mandate letter. On August 17, Serena sent a letter to Premier King expressing praise for the mandate letter.

November 6, 2023: Basic Income Guarantee

A letter promoting basic income guarantee, to be shared with the Minister's Cabinet colleagues.

February 8, 2024: 2026 Equality Report Card Model

A letter providing the final version of the 2026 Equality Report Card Assessment Model.

The Council directs its input on public consultations to the Minister Responsible, including, for example, the Pre-Budget Submission (December 22).

Minister Roundtables

Council's ED and representatives from core-funded gender-equality organizations took part in Minister Jameson's roundtables on emerging equality issues.

May 9, 2023: Topics included core and multi-year operational funding, reproductive and trans rights, praise for gender health and sexual violence response strategies, and excitement about the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.

March 7, 2024: Topics included Council's four key priorities as well as International Women's Day, gender-diverse people's rights; restorative justice, economic empowerment, and the affordability crisis.

2026 Equality Report Card

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women initiated the Equality Report Card process in 2007. It represents a collaborative process to assess provincial government progress towards gender equality goals.

Previous Report Cards were published in 2008 (pilot), 2009 & 2011; 2013 & 2015; 2018; and 2022. The Report Card cycle begins with a new government's being elected. Following the April 2023 election, Council members began plans for a Report Card in 2026.

Council Process

Assessment Model and Timeline

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's goal is to use the Equality Report Card process as a tool to work collaboratively with government to help the Province achieve high grades in all categories.

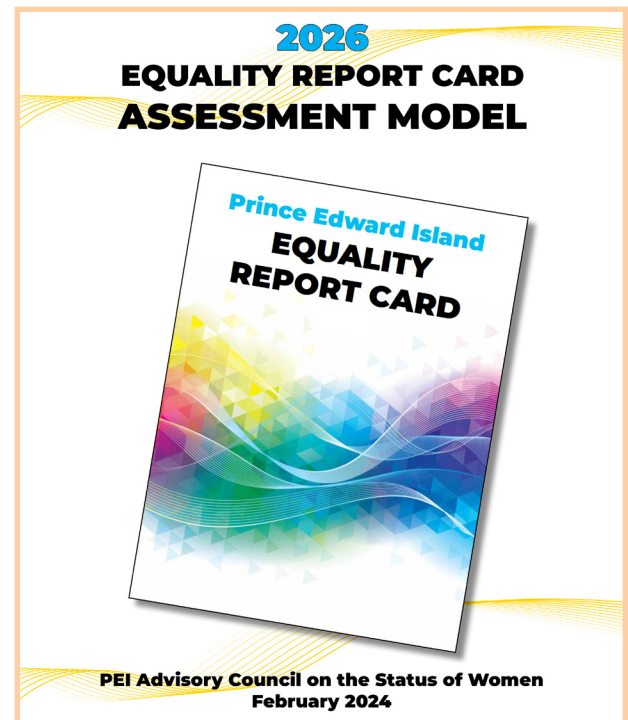
After committing to a 2026 Equality Report Card, Council members, with the leadership of the Executive, developed an assessment model, building on what has been learned from previous Report Cards and tailored to this mandate of government.

In May 2023, Council members decided on a model that will assess three types of initiative: how well government sustains positive progress on gender equality; new initiatives government identifies as advancing equality; and progress towards Council-identified aspirational equality goals.

In the fall of 2023, Council members designed overarching statements for five categories:

- Making Diversity, Equality, & Inclusion a Priority
- Eliminating Poverty
- Supports for Caregivers & Caregiving
- Women's & Gender-Diverse People's Mental & Physical Health
- Ending Gender-Based Violence

By February 2024, Council members by consensus finalized a list of 20 specific Council-identified aspirational goals and a 50 initiatives that described the status quo for gender equality up to April 2023 and that are essential to sustain. Council presented the assessment model to the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and published the model in February 2024.

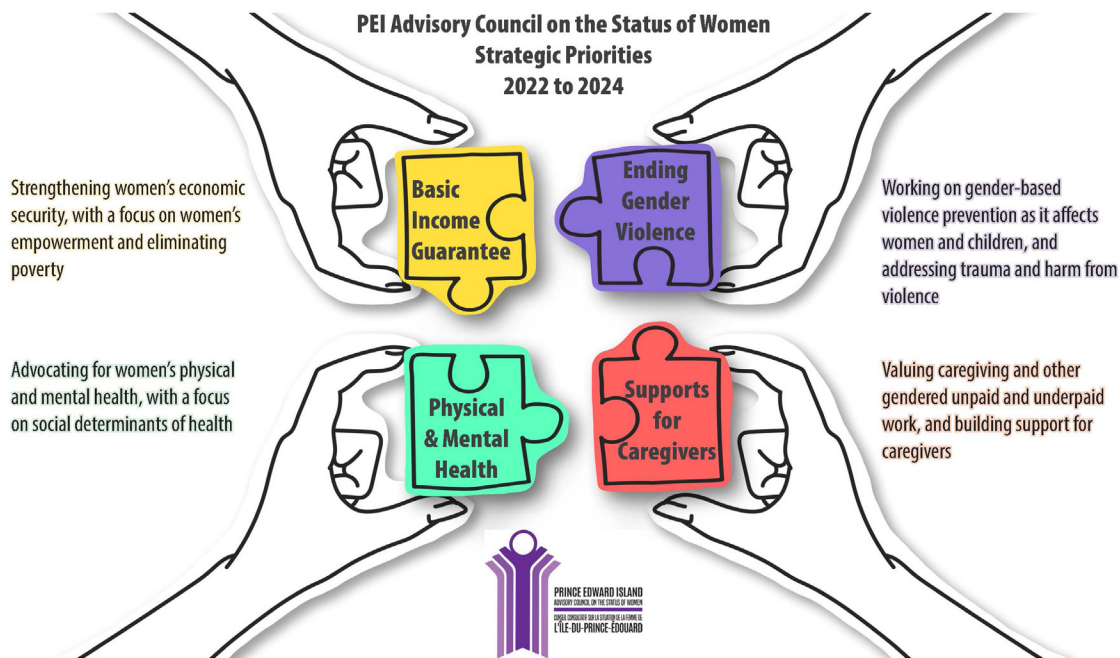


Community Perceptions

Survey of Community Partners

As part of the 2022 Equality Report Card, the Council introduced a survey of community-sector organizations, to gain insight into their perceptions of progress towards gender equality in PEI. For the 2026 Equality Report Card, Council decided to create a similar survey, to be conducted in two phases. A first bilingual survey in 2023 provided a snapshot of community perceptions at the beginning of the Report Card cycle. Between January 7 and March 3, this survey received 48 responses representing 32 organizations and 11 Council members and staff. Results provide baseline data. The second phase in 2025 will be open to those who had previously responded and new respondents.

PRIORITY ISSUES 2022–2024



Basic Income Guarantee

Strengthening women's economic security, with a focus on women's empowerment and eliminating poverty.



Ending Gender Violence

Working on gender-based violence prevention as it affects women and children, and addressing trauma and harm from violence.



Physical & Mental Health

Advocating for women's physical and mental health, with a focus on social determinants of health.



Supports for Caregivers

Valuing caregiving and other gendered unpaid and underpaid work, and building support for caregivers.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's 2022–2024 strategic plan included three goals. **Goal 1**, to increase operational/service capacity by 25–50%, was achieved with an expanded grant and hiring of a Research Coordinator. **Goal 2**, to move the needle on the priority areas listed above, was achieved through actions described in the following pages. **Goal 3**, to improve the terms of government consultation, was achieved through relationship-building, feedback to government on consultation processes, and development of the model for the 2026 Equality Report Card.

Basic Income Guarantee

National advocates for basic income guarantee have been inspired by PEI's all-party political support for exploring basic income guarantee.

Support in PEI has been expressed in public statements, motions of the Legislature, and, most importantly, recommendations for a Basic Income program for PEI in the final report from the Special Committee on Poverty in PEI; and by public knowledge and support, built up through grassroots community events. This inspiration resulted in major national project to propose a model for a guaranteed basic income benefit for all of PEI, scalable to all of Canada.



A BIG Proposal for PEI

Through the Working Group for a Livable Income, Council also is connected with Coalition Canada - basic income revenu de base. Coalition Canada put together a team of national economists, politicians, senior civil servants, and community advocates to develop the ***Proposal for a Guaranteed Basic Income Benefit for PEI***. Prior to her work on Council, Trish Altass was a member of the advisory committee for the proposal.

- The PEI Working Group for a Livable Income hosted the public release of Coalition Canada's proposal Highlights of news conference to release Coalition Canada's Proposal for a Guaranteed Basic Income Benefit for PEI (November 22). Council staff contributed to planning and presenting.
- Research Coordinator Trish Altass spoke at the news conference, did interviews with CBC PEI *Mainstreet* and *Compass* and CBC *Maritime Noon*; and with CTV Atlantic. Council ED spoke to *La Voix Acadienne*.

Regional & National Work



- For Coalition Canada, Research Coordinator Trish Altass joined Marie Burge of Cooper Institute to present to the Federal Finance Committee (FINA) on why PEI is an ideal place for a Basic Income Demonstration project (October 10).
- ED Jane Ledwell co-presented to Atlantic Liberal MPs with Mandy Raining-Bird of Basic Income NOW Atlantic. The meeting was hosted by Charlottetown MP Sean Casey (November 14).
- Trish attended a presentation on basic income by economist Herb Emery, who worked on the PEI proposal (January 16).
- Council staff hosted lunch for visiting representatives of the Basic Income Canada Youth Network (now renamed the Basic Income Youth Collective) Chloe Halpenny and Kendal David at our office (March 22).



Top left: Leo Garland (left) and Council staff (right) at the *Proposal* news conference. Above: Sam Ledwell MacInnis, Jane Ledwell, Michelle Jay, Marie Burge, Kendal David, Chloe Halpenny, Trish Altass, and Leo Garland in March 2024.

Basic Income Guarantee

Through the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is playing a key role in local, regional, and national efforts to eliminate poverty through a Basic Income Guarantee.

The Advisory Council has been an active member of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income since its founding. The Working Group for Livable Income advocates for livable incomes for all PEI residents, regardless of the source of their income. In September 2023, the Working Group celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a public celebration at the Haviland Club.



Cutting the cake for Basic Income Now! We believe there is enough cake for everyone who needs some.



The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's key partnership for poverty elimination is the *PEI Working Group for a Livable Income*. The Working Group met with PEI MLAs and federal leaders, MPs, and Senators and with national advocates to promote a vision and plan for a basic income guarantee demonstration project that could launch province-wide in PEI and scale up to all of Canada.

Policy highlights related to eliminating poverty have included the following:

- Basic income guarantee was central discussion in a roundtable consultation on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (May 9).
- Poverty elimination was a focus of conversation with researchers working on behalf of the Family Law Section to understand perceptions of PEI's family law roles and programs (November 6).
- Basic income guarantee was included as a priority in Council's pre-budget submission (December 22), and this input was reflected in government's consultation summary report.
- Council's Research Coordinator took part in a Working Group for a Livable Income meeting with Social Development and Seniors Minister, Hon. Barb Ramsay (January 23).

By using the census family, a greater share of Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI) expenditures would be provided to families living in poverty while reducing the cost of the GBI by about \$120 million or almost

40%

Source: Proposal for a Guaranteed Basic Income Benefit for PEI, November 2023

Highlight of Work for a Basic Income Guarantee

In March 2024, a letter was sent to Minister Ramsay from federal Minister Sudds in which she expressed a willingness to explore the creation of a working group in support of PEI's work to evaluate a Guaranteed Basic Income. This is an encouraging development and the council is excited to see how this collaboration between the Province of PEI and the Federal Government on Basic Income progresses.



On September 13, the Working Group for a Livable Income celebrated its 20th anniversary of work to eliminate poverty and establish basic income guarantee in PEI. The “Wiggly Sisters,” Michelle Jay and Jane Ledwell, prepared and sang a special (and quite silly) tribute to Working Group co-founder Marie Burge.



Marie Burge speaking, with national panelists, at the news conference for the *Proposal for a Guaranteed Basic Income for PEI* in November 2023.

Public education on poverty elimination by the Advisory Council included participating in a webinar on food security in Atlantic Canada, sponsored by the Public Health Agency of Canada (October 16). Research Coordinator Trish Altass contributed an op-ed (“Eliminating Poverty Is Possible,” Feb. 28) to a five-part series of op-eds organized by the Working Group for a Livable Income. The series was published as a booklet.

Trish and Council member Gina Younker were also both featured on the CBC PEI podcast “Good Question PEI,” on the question, “What’s the BIG idea on basic income?” (February 28), available on CBC Listen. Council representatives on the Working Group for a Livable income collaborated to develop an explainer on why the Province’s “targeted basic income,” while an important program, doesn’t meet basic income principles and needs a new name.

Learning opportunities on poverty elimination included a Community Forum on Homelessness (June 19). Members of the Working Group for a Livable Income also benefited throughout the year from opportunities to be briefed on the *Proposal for a Guaranteed Basic Income Benefit for Prince Edward Island*, by members of Coalition Canada - basic income guarantee revenu de base.

Physical and Mental Health

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women acknowledges the significant impacts of systemic inequalities and the social determinants of health for physical and mental health and well-being.

The Council supports a health-in-all-policies approach to legislation and policy development, and regularly collaborates with healthcare professionals and community-based organizations to advocate for healthcare systems changes that will meet the needs of women and gender-diverse people.



Council's October 30 retreat meeting included a beach walk for the group's mental and physical health.



In 2022, the Province of PEI launched *Awareness to Action: A Health Strategy for Women and Islanders Who Are Gender Diverse 2022-2027*. The Advisory Council on the Status of Women took part in consultations in the lead-up to the launch of the strategy. Council is represented on the Women's and Gender Diverse People's Health Council that advises on implementation.

Policy highlights related to women's and gender-diverse people's health included the following:

- **Pre-budget Consultations:** Supports for women's and gender-diverse people's mental and physical health were included as a priority in the pre-budget submission from the Council (December 22).
- **Primary Care Renewal:** Council was represented at a Department of Health and Wellness/Health PEI consultation with community partners on primary care renewal, focused on patient medical homes and neighbourhoods (January 17).
- **Access to Contraception:** All of Council participated as a focus group on access to contraception (January 24). Council staff organized for the Abortion Rights Network to serve as a focus group too (January 19). Both groups promoted participation in an online survey for individuals.

"It is estimated that as many as

40%

of women have some sort of pelvic floor disorder."

Source: IWK Maritime Centre for Pelvic Floor Health, <https://iwkhealth.ca/clinics-programs-services/maritime-centre-pelvic-floor-health-mcpfh>

Health in All Policies

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is an active member of the Atlantic Summerside Institute PEI Advisory committee. Part of this collaborative effort has involved advocating for a “health in all policies” (HiAP) framework that places people at the centre of government work and ensures policies consider impacts on physical and mental health and the ripples one action can create across an entire governance ecosystem (WHO 2014).



Excellent training, “Anti-Racism in Healthcare: An Intersectional Practice,” was presented by Dr. Omisoore Dryden (Dec. 14).

Regular meetings of the gender health council took place April 25, June 8, September 19, December 7, and March 1.

The Advisory Council participates in other active partnerships focused on health, including a new task force on pelvic floor health.

The Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities has a project on investing upstream for child and youth mental health, through the lens of health in all policies. Council is represented on the advisory committee. Representatives also attended the Atlantic Summer Institute (August 21 to 23).

Public education on women’s health by the Advisory Council included staff participation in a rally in support of children’s rights to gender identity and care (June 9), and Jane provided comments to Radio-Canada/CBC. Research coordinator Trish Altass and Council member Barb McDowall attended a counter-protest supporting trans rights for children and youth while a group rallied against trans rights (Sept. 20). This event was very troubling. The turnout and vitriol on the side of hate were upsetting.

Council representatives followed up on actions requested by the End FGM Canada Network at the Equal Futures Network conference to promote End FGM’s free, survivor-informed, anti-oppressive training program on female genital mutilation and cutting. Promotions were designed and sent to the MAO newsletter that goes out from the Province to all medical personnel (July). A special promotion for educators also went out to the health curriculum specialist with the Department of Education (September).

Through the ASI, Council assisted with an Alliance for Mental Wellbeing–funded workshop exploring upstream investment (pilot workshop February 29). **Learning opportunities** related to health and gender included an Alliance for Mental Wellbeing research forum (September 27); a “Vital Conversations” survey about community wellbeing (September 26); the 12 Annual Alzheimer’s Awareness Conference (January 25); and the Alcohol Policy Forum (March 21–22).

Ending Gender-Based Violence

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women coordinates the annual Purple Ribbon Campaign Against Violence Against Women and the annual Montreal Massacre Memorial Service and is now playing its part in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence..

As part of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, efforts to engage and support individuals and communities to understand, prevent, and end gender-based violence were implemented throughout the year with a series of Council-led community consultations, panels, and study groups.



The Advisory Council on the Status of Women's key partnership for ending gender-based violence is the Premier's Action Committee (PAC) on Family Violence Prevention. In 2023-2024, the last year of PAC's 5th mandate, the Council took part with the full provincial group, the administrative committee, and working groups. Council staff and members participated in Family Violence Prevention Week in May.

In the last year, **policy highlights** related to eliminating gender-based violence included these, and Council's ED took part in each of the following:

- A police services stakeholder engagement session regarding policing standards (May 10).
- A consultation about the new therapeutic court option for domestic violence, through PAC Admin (November 9).
- A consultation held by the Family Violence Prevention Manager about intimate partner violence prevention (October 6).
- A conversation with researchers working on behalf of the Family Law Section to understand perceptions of PEI's family law roles and programs (November 6).
- A consultation with the Atlantic Police Academy on gender-based violence (January 19).

In 2019, the rate of family violence in rural areas in Canada was

2.0

times higher than in urban areas, with the rate being 1.8 times higher for women and girls than men and boys.

Source: Conroy, S. Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019. Statistics Canada.

Premier's Action Committee Strategic Plan

The fifth mandate of the PEI Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention (PAC) came to successful completion in March 2023. PAC developed a five-year vision for its next mandate: "Over the next five years, PAC will focus on elevating education and awareness about family violence across PEI, enhancing collaboration for more coordinated efforts, prioritizing continuous learning and evaluation, and nurturing a more engaged membership to support these transformative goals."



Council's program coordinator serves on PAC's Sexual Assault Prevention Working Group to help coordinate awareness week events like Take Back the Night.

Council's Program Coordinator Michelle Jay participates on partnerships that relate to ending gender-based violence. She completed her time on the board of **Justice Options for Women**, an access to justice collaboration. Other partnerships included government's **Victim Services Advisory Committee**, and **Pathways to Thrive**, a project led by Women's Network PEI with PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre exploring alternative healing modalities for survivors.

Council's Executive Director chairs PAC's Evaluation Work to evaluate programs, trainings, and events such as Family Violence Prevention Week.

Michelle took part in a day with Catalyst trainers, "Decolonizing our Work, Creating Brave Spaces, and Supporting BIPOC Survivors" (April 13). Nationally, Michelle Jay participates on the National Taskforce Policy & Advocacy committee of the **Canadian Centre for Women's Empowerment**. Council's Executive Director Jane Ledwell serves on the expert panel of the **Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability**.

As a member of PAC Admin, Council's Executive Director took part in extensive strategic planning for PAC's 6th mandate.

The Council office served as a hub for distributing 10,000+ resources province-wide for Family Violence Prevention Week in May 2023. Council also took part in Wear Purple Day and the Walk in Silence for Victims of Family Violence. Council staff attended PAC-sponsored training on neurobiology of trauma, with Dr. Lori Haskell.

Local learning opportunities and events on gender-based violence included Victims and Survivors of Crime Week online and in-person events (May); Sexual Assault Awareness Week art exhibits and conversation circles (September); PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre's *Provocation: A Play*, a dramatization of their founding (November); a meeting for leaders on community needs and training approaches for people who use violence in intimate relationships (January 31).

Ending Gender-Based Violence, continued: Purple Ribbon Campaign



Public Education Highlights

Public education on gender-based violence took place through the 34th annual Purple Ribbon Campaign.

Resources for 2023–2024 included the following:

- 10,000 purple ribbons pinned to bookmarks by volunteers, featuring the theme “Healing Gender-Based Violence Begins Here.” Again this year, Women’s Institute branches did most of the pinning and this year were encouraged to do more local distribution in their communities.
- 5,000 each of buttons and *new* stickers with purple ribbon images and relevant messages.
- Slideshows, handouts, and other materials developed for use by teachers and students, available on our website.
- Multilingual posters featuring the theme message in 12 languages (historical and current usage in PEI).

Presentations, media, and public education events included these:

- The Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee at the Charlottetown Library Learning Centre kitchen (November 8) was filled to capacity with Council members and volunteers. Carolyn MacFadyen, CP of the Federated Women’s Institute made a presentation about the importance of the purple ribbons to them.
- Chairperson Serena Smith wrote a commentary for *Saltwire* and our website for December 6.
- CBC, the *Charlottetown Guardian* and *La Voix Acadienne* covered the Montreal Massacre Memorial Service (December 6).



Volunteer Kofoworola Williams and Michelle Jay at the Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee.



Volunteers at the Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee at the Charlottetown Library Learning Centre in November 2023.

Ending Gender-Based Violence: Montreal Massacre Memorial Service



(L to R) Anastasia DesRoches, Nikkie Gallant, & Serena Smith.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is grateful for Purple Ribbon Campaign supporters.

Funding Sponsors: Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention; City of Charlottetown; Interministerial Women's Secretariat; National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence

Memorial Service Venue Sponsor: Confederation Centre of the Arts

In-kind Partners: Women's Institutes (Purple Ribbon pinning & province-wide distribution); Family Violence Prevention Services; Public Service Alliance of Canada Western PEI Women's Committee; Janine Gallant; Brandy Beazley; Kofoworola Williams; volunteers & supporters across PEI.

Council members hosted the annual December 6 Montreal Massacre Memorial Service in Memorial Hall in the Confederation Centre. With candle-lighting and ceremony, the service commemorated the victims of the Montreal Massacre and PEI women killed by men who knew them.



The 2023 Memorial Service program was emceed by Advisory Council Chairperson Serena Smith.

Hosts and Greeters

Members of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Piano Music

Todd MacLean

Indigenous Ceremony

Community leader Madlene Sark & Elder Judy Peters

Welcoming Remarks and Comments

Serena Smith, Chairperson of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Candle-Lighting for Victims of the Montreal Massacre

Readings by Jane Ledwell, PEI ACSW

Guest Speaker and Singer: "The Power of Words"

Nikkie Gallant, singer-songwriter and advocate

Candle-Lighting for PEI Murdered Women

Candles lit by family members and friends of murdered women, political leaders, community-sector leaders, front-line workers with victims and survivors of violence, and Purple Ribbon Campaign volunteers

Closing Instrumental Music

Anastasia DesRoches



Mi'kmaw ceremony led by Madlene Sark and Elder Judy Peters.



Min. Jameson lights a candle.



All members of Council at the 2023 Montreal Massacre Memorial Service.

Ending Gender-Based Violence, continued: National Action Plan

Prince Edward Island's bilateral agreement to take part in the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence was announced August 2023. In advance of the plan, Council's ED participated in a roundtable consultation on the Plan with the Interministerial Women's Secretariat (May 9). Council's ED and Program Coordinator were delighted to attend the news conference held by PEI Minister Jameson and federal Minister Marci Len to announce the federal-provincial agreement (August 2). Council will also be represented in a Women's Network-led initiative to coordinate community engagement work under the National Action Plan. The first workshop took place February 21. Council's Program Coordinator also met with representatives of the Native Council about their National Action Plan activities (March 21).

Women Talking Study Group



In March 2024, in the context of the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, the Advisory Council hosted "Women Talking about Gender-Based Violence: A Study Group for All Genders" to discuss themes in Miriam Toews's novel *Women Talking* and the film of the same name based on the book. The book and film examine community impacts of gender-based violence; the power of women's and feminized people's resistance and solidarity; and the complex options facing survivors.

The *Women Talking* study group activities were as follows:

- **Film Screening**, March 12: A screening of the film adaptation of *Women Talking*, adapted and directed by Sarah Polley, was followed by discussion.
- **Advisory Council Talking Circle**, March 14: In the context of a regular Council meeting, Council members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women held a roundtable discussion of the themes of the film and book, which they had selected as the focus of the study group.
- **Virtual Talking Circles**, March 19&20: A facilitated discussion of the themes of gender-based violence in *Women Talking*, supported by emotional support worker available, opening ceremonial reflection, and a closing somatic exercise.
- **Panel Discussion**, March 26: A panel and discussion on the role of culture and the arts in preventing and ending gender-based violence, co-hosted with the PEI Writers' Guild. The exceptional panelists were Rev. Debbie Aitken, Evelyn Bradley, Dr. Jean Mitchell, and Elder Julie Pellissier-Lush.



The *Women Talking* study group used Miriam Toews's book as a starting point for discussing gender-based violence.

Motivated Municipalities

Following from the Purple Ribbon Campaign 2023-2024 and the theme "Ending gender-based violence begins here," the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women set out to partner with a municipality to develop and pilot a model of community engagement to end gender-based violence.

The primary activities related to the "Motivated Municipalities" project up to March 31 were partnership development. The Council identified the Town of Kensington as the municipality we most wanted to work with, and we were delighted that they agreed to partner on a community action plan for their town.

Council also built a partnership with Under the Spire, a not-for-profit arts organization based in the heart of the community. Together with partners, we planned for project activities to take place in April and May.

Supports for Caregivers

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women work on Gender and COVID-19 underscored the reliance on caregivers for a well-functioning society. Women continue to carry heavier burdens of family and community caregiving.

Based on a discussion at the September 23 Council meeting, Council staff corresponded with a representative from the PEI Early Childhood Development Association to better understand the role and processes associated with the PEI Child Care Registry and current wait lists for licensed child care spaces, and the implications for childcare providers.



We love this PRIDE parade message for caregivers of children and youth, carried by friends from PEIRASC.

Input to Public Consultations

Opportunities for input on caregiving included these:

- **Experiences of Unpaid Caregivers:** Council staff responded to a Health and Wellness survey to gather information about the experiences and needs of unpaid caregivers. The survey was focused on individual experiences, so it was completed from an individual perspective, with staff taking notes on broader policy implications arising from questions.
- **Paid Sick Leave:** Council shared their advice to government on paid sick leave (from the Employment Standards Comprehensive Review submission) with Minister Jameson and with party leaders to inform debate on Opposition and Third Party bills to expand paid sick leave.
- **Pre-budget Consultations:** Supports for caregivers were included as a priority in the pre-budget submission from the Council (December 22).

Council Discussions

Council hosted its annual gathering of past-Chairpersons in June for a roundtable discussion of caregivers' experiences and needs (June 16). A lot of discussion centred on care to adults, especially seniors, and end-of-life care. From this discussion, we generated a report that informed a roundtable of Council members (September 23) that added more insights, including more content related to caregiving to infants, children, and youth.

Follow-up from Council questions included checking in on how waitlists for childcare spaces are working. The reports from these discussions helped inform planning for the Creating Collective Care conference described on the following pages.



A quotation from a participant in a consultation with past-Chairpersons of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women:

"There are no emotional supports for the caregivers. Caregivers can fail before the person they are caring for."

Supports for Caregivers: Creating Collective Care Conference

At the end of January and beginning of February 2024, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women co-hosted and co-sponsored the Creating Collective Care Conference in Summerside, PEI. This conference integrated Council members' desire for a symposium on caregiving with the United Way's plans for a provincial conference among social-serving organizations and the Community Sector Network's efforts to build the community sector. The conference maintained a strong focus on caregiving in all the varied and broad collective meanings of the word.



The Advisory Council on the Status of Women's key partnerships to present the Creating Collective Care conference were United Way PEI and the Community Sector Network. Council representatives participated in all planning meetings, and Council's Program Coordinator, Michelle Jay, co-led the conference programming committee with conference coordinator Alexia Riche.



The virtual keynote at the conference was filmmaker, activist, and public intellectual Astra Taylor on the politics of caregiving and collective care.



Emily Rutledge moderating the conference panel on Caregiving Across the Lifespan.

The Creating Collective Care event provided training, education, and support for individuals working in the non-profit sector. There was enthusiastic and thoughtful participation from over 200 individuals representing a wide variety of organizations in the voluntary sector.

We were proud to be part of creating the Creating Collective Care conference with the Community Sector Network and United Way of PEI.

Each of the workshops was well-attended and responses were positive. The online conversation with Astra Taylor, led by Jane, was profound and inspiring.

Council member Emily Rutledge moderated a panel on Caregiving Across the Lifespan with representatives from ResourceAbilities, Hospice PEI, and Student Well-Being Teams.



The conference organizing team: Alexia Riche and Caroline Batten (CSNPEI), Michelle Jay (ACSW), Andrea MacDonald (United Way), Jane Ledwell (ACSW), and Treena Smith (United Way - 211).

The event was held in Summerside and offered an array of workshops, panel presentations, and plenary discussions covering three general program areas: Governance, Fundraising and Development, and Supports for Caregivers.

The smaller workshops offered diverse, engaging, and challenging perspectives on community and self-care.

Amidst the learning, there was time for entertainment, trivia, and socializing.

The majority of participants were women, and many were new to collaborating with others in the sector. The conference was an excellent partnership opportunity to support community work and well-being across PEI.



Past Chairpersons

Annual Consultation: Caregiving

The annual gathering of past Chairpersons of Council focused in 2023 on caregiving. Chairperson Serena Smith and Council staff welcomed eight past Chairpersons of the Council to the roundtable on June 16.

The theme of the discussion this year was the many forms caregiving takes across family and community—caregiving across the lifespan; among family, friends, and neighbours; care for caregivers; and collective care. Participants in the roundtable were straightforward about the gender-based pressures on women to provide care over the entire span of their lives.

A summary report was shared as a website post, and the full discussion was shared with Council.

Back, left to right: Serena Smith, Cathy Rose, Anne Nicholson, Isabelle Christian, Sharon O'Brien, and Kirstin Lund; front, Yvonne Deagle, Mari Basiletti, Dianne Porter.



Some Community Collaborations



Serena Smith, Eileen Conboy, Caroline MacRae, Sarah Outram, and Alexia Riche with the Feminist PRIDE banner in July.

PRIDE Advocacy All Year

Lead: PEERS Alliance

The feminist and 2SLGBTQIA+ community and allies were shaken in September by a rally against trans rights for children and youth, and troubling interactions with counter-protesting allies. Community-building response followed. Council benefited that Program Coordinator Michelle Jay in her own time participated in the Queer Movement Retreat in the Evangeline Region (November 10 to 12). The participant-led retreat focused on holding space for community joy and healing as well as strategies for social action and advocacy.



Coalition staff Kari Kruse, Sweta Daboo, and Sarah Outram at their April Women's Leadership Symposium.

PRIDE Week

Lead: PRIDE PEI

Program Coordinator Michelle Jay coordinated PRIDE parade participation for Council and other women's organizations to show our FEMINIST PRIDE. At the July 29 parade, Council members Serena Smith, Caroline MacRae, and Barb McDowall took part, along with Council staff Michelle Jay and Jane Ledwell and their families, and representatives from Women's Network PEI, Family Violence Prevention Services, PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, the Community Sector Network, and the Coalition for Women in Government.



Council staffperson Trish Altass and Council member Barb McDowall supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ rights in September.

Leadership Symposium

Lead: Coalition for Women in Government

April began with the final two days of a symposium on women's leadership, led by the PEI Coalition for Women in Government. Executive Director Jane Ledwell presented a plenary session on the status of women in PEI, with a focus on the story in statistics and progress measured in the Equality Report Card (April 1). In May, Jane and Michelle Jay travelled as part of the Coalition's delegation to the Equal Futures Network in Whitehorse, Yukon, and did some great cross-team-building.

Black Women's History

Lead: Interministerial Women's Secretariat

When Debbie Langston was Chairperson of the Advisory Council, as our first Black Chair, she initiated a project to create curriculum resources for PEI schools, to highlight PEI Black women's history. Debbie later led the project through the Interministerial Women's Secretariat with the Department of Education and Black Cultural Society. Content was launched in October 2023 and then finalized. Committee member Linda Hennessey, a descendant of Black Islanders, won the Boyde Beck Memorial Heritage Award for her contributions.



Debbie Langston and Jane Ledwell at the workshop day.

Later in the day on October 27, the Chairs Circle for Gender Equality celebrated a public launch of their new organization. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is proud to be a partner in the Chairs Circle and to have helped to plan their celebration.

The PEI 150: Women Making History event celebrated women's changing role in the 150 years since Prince Edward Island joined Canadian Confederation in 1873. The event featured historical displays, a talk by Elder Judy Clark connecting Women's History Month and Mi'kmaq History Month, and performance of an excerpt from the suffragette-celebrating "Bessie Carruthers Study Club" by Suzanne Campbell with Stephanie Cole.



Roslyn Tamula, Linda Hennessey, Min. Jameson, Debbie Langston, Tamara Steele, and Chikondi Tamula all contributed to the Black Women's History Project. Photo: Gov't of PEI.

Women Making History

Lead: Chairs Circle for Gender Equality

A day of workshops organized by the Chairs Circle for Gender Equality for women's history month brought together interested members of the public and educators on a professional development day (October 27). A morning workshop by Debbie Langston presented the Black Women's History Project; an afternoon workshop by Michelle Jay and Sarah Outram considered "Votes for Women: The Next 100 Years." Short, pop-up workshops looked at how to contribute to public archives (by Archives staff) and women's visibility in photography (by Kari Kruse).



Suzanne Campbell and Stephanie Cole performing scenes from "The Bessie Carruthers Study Club."

International Women's Day

The 2024 theme for International Women's Day was Invest in Women: Accelerate Equality. Investing in women is a human rights imperative for building inclusive and equitable societies. Progress for women benefits us all. IWD is a day to celebrate the achievements, strength, and worth of women and girls globally.

Invest in Women: Accelerate Equality!

The March 8 2024 IWD event held in the Charlottetown Library was a joyous opportunity for the community to gather in person to accelerate gender equality! Once again, we were able to create an inclusive, accessible, diverse, participatory and free-of-charge feminist celebration where women-identifying, non-binary folks, and men were welcomed.

A variety of performers shared their music, dance, and traditions, beginning with Wolastoqi sisters Sophia and Ellie Bourque leading Indigenous Round Dance. Monelli Rahmatian demonstrated Persian dance, the PEI Sikh community shared their unique music and ritual, and Carlie Howell played original music on upright bass. Community organizations shared their initiatives to engage and advance women and girls, and individuals spoke of human rights challenges as transwomen. Chairperson Serena Smith wrote on the IWD theme of investing in women, which was published in *The Guardian* and which we read on her behalf.



And as usual there were refreshments (catered by Cured Creations), IWD gifts, and a children's corner with books and activities. The afternoon ended with Shannon Scales leading participants in singing "Bread and Roses."

Council members took responsibility for helping to organize the event – special appreciation to Barb McDowall and Hsiao-Yu Liu for their unfailing enthusiasm in creating community connection and allyship. Also thanks to OJT student Amy C. who was an invaluable support, and Maggie Lillo for graphic design and patience!



Left to right, March 8, 2024: Round dance celebrations; Carlie Howell performs with their upright bass; the IWD organizers, Hsiao-Yu Liu, Barb McDowall, Michelle Jay, Amy C. and Donna Dingwell. Amy was an amazing OJT intern with us in March.

Council-Led Special Projects

Bursaries for Women

Annual deadline to apply: October 15

Diane Kays Memorial Bursary (\$750) available to a woman-identifying student who is a resident of PEI and registered full-time at the University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College, or Collège de l'Île.

2023 Winner: Molly Birtwhistle

Inge Blackett Memorial Bursary (\$750): for a woman-identifying PEI resident who entered Canada as a refugee and is pursuing further education.

2023 Winner: Inas Al Jneid



Bursary winners often attend the Montreal Massacre Memorial Service, but none were available this year.



Multilingual thank you sign created for Council events.

Migrant Worker Rights Bursary (\$750): A new bursary for a woman-identifying PEI resident who has been designated a Temporary Foreign Worker and is pursuing further education:

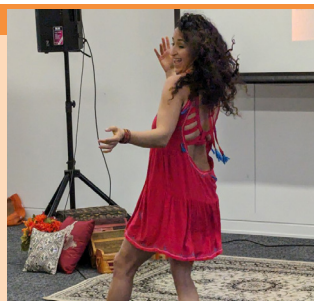
2023 Winner: Marjorie Benignos

Special thanks to Council members Gina Younker and Hsiao-Yu Liu for serving on the bursary committee.

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Engineering Bursary: Administered by UPEI, named in our honour, and awarded to a woman studying engineering. Information about this bursary is available from the University of Prince Edward Island.

2023 Winner: Amara Sánchez Cepeda



Left to right: Monelli Rahmatian leads Persian dance at IWD celebrations. Council members were grateful for beautiful packages created by Inverness Kane (centre), who also spoke about challenges faced by immigrant trans women.

Communications

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women submits news releases and opinion pieces to media and responds to media requests. Ordinarily, spokespersons on behalf of the Council are the Chairperson, the Executive Director, and the Program Coordinator. The Council provides a weekly e-newsletter as a free community service. Subscribers receive submitted listings of community notices. Council staff members independently manage content of the official website at peistatusofwomen.ca and a social media presence on Facebook to educate and engage.



Council members and staff in Victoria-by-the-Sea, September.



Council staff in Charlottetown in December.

WEBSITE

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women website at peistatusofwomen.ca is updated regularly. Analytics highlights included over 10,873 page views by 4,987 users, 1,657 more page views and 1,187 more users compared to last year. Users were mostly in Canada, with over 32% in Charlottetown, PEI. The home page was most visited followed by the Purple Ribbon Campaign, members and staff, Montreal Massacre Memorial Service, bursaries, and PEI is Ready for a Basic Income Guarantee.

COMMENTARIES

"Healing Gender-Based Violence Begins Here" |

"Commençons ici ..." by Serena Smith (December 6)

"Eliminating Poverty Is Possible," by Trish Altass for the Working Group for a Livable Income (February 28)

"Invest in Women: Accelerate Equality" | "Investir en faveur des femmes : accélérer le rythme" by Serena Smith (March 7)

MEDIA REQUESTS

Interview with Clemence Voillot for Actions Femmes's podcast on francophone/francophile women (April 18)

Interview with CBC *Compass* and radio/web about the Rubin-Thomlinson report on a toxic workplace culture at UPEI (June 15), with a follow-up after the work of the UPEI Action Plan Advisory Group report (January 9)

Interview with CBC Nova Scotia about basic income guarantee (September 26, aired October 27)

Interviews with Radio Canada about the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (August 2) and about sexist comments by an MLA (October 5)

Interviews with the *Eastern Graphic* and *Western Graphic* about the Purple Ribbon Campaign and Montreal Massacre memorial (November 21 and 22)

Interviews with Research Coordinator Trish and Council member Gina Younker for the CBC podcast "Good Question PEI," on the question, "What's the BIG idea on basic income?" (February 28)

Interview with CBC web reporter on trends in crime (March 15), informed by thoughts shared by Council at a meeting (March 14)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Council has a presence on Facebook. A snapshot of analytics for the year ending March 31, 2024:

- Total posts: 259 (including weekly e-news)
- Total followers: 2,106. Our audience is 86% women, with the highest age demographic being 35-44 years of age (24%). Most live in Charlottetown.

Many posts, or combined posts on a topic, received 1,000s of likes: Creating Collective Care conference (July to Feb.); Feminist PRIDE parade participation (July and Aug.); advertising and hiring of Trish as Research Coordinator (July to Sept.); the tragic death of Summer Kneebone (Aug.); September Council meeting photos; notice of ACSW bursaries; the Sisters in Spirit Vigil (Oct.); Acadian women intergenerational sewing (Oct.); a missing woman (Oct.); Serena meeting with Min. Jameson (Nov.); Purple Ribbon Pinning Bee (Nov.); Trans Awareness Week (Nov.); Working Group for a Livable Income media conference (Nov.); the tragic death of Tyson MacDonald (Dec.); UPEI's Rubin-Thomlinson report (January); Denim, representing PEI on *Canada's Drag Race*; C&B Café's Queer New Year Levee (Jan.); Sarah Outram speaking about online hate of women political candidates (Jan.); and CBC's Good Question PEI podcast on basic income (March). Two March events garnered substantial interest through posts profiling individual women performers and speakers – IWD (28,000+) and the Women Talking Study Group (9,000+).

E-NEWS

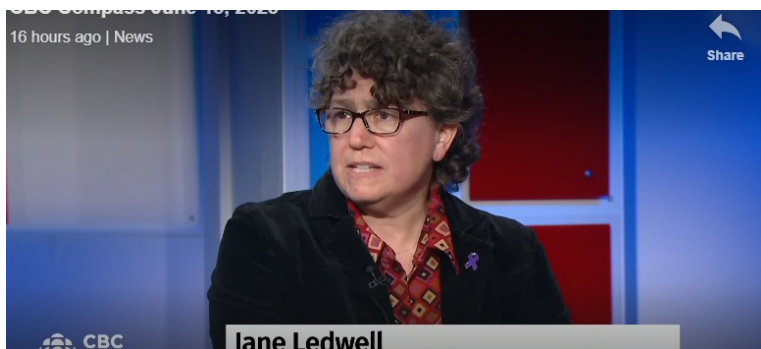
The Advisory Council e-news sent out 42 campaigns in 2023–2024, from April to June and September to March. In addition, a special summer E-news was sent out in July with title “We’re Hiring!” and a special edition celebrated International Women’s Day - March 8, 2024. Campaigns included at least 607 notices. Our e-newsletter is sent to our subscriber list of 369 members usually every Thursday and listings are also available at a link on our website. To subscribe directly, copy and paste this link in a browser: <http://eepurl.com/rQH6P>.



Jane Ledwell and Minister Jameson, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, November 25.



Women Talking panellists Jean Mitchell, Julie Pellissier-Lush, Evelyn Bradley, and Debbie Aitken introduced by Michelle.



Screenshot of Jane Ledwell speaking on CBC *Compass* about the Rubin-Thomlinson report on UPEI workplace culture.

Learning from Community

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women participates in continuous learning and professional development: formally, through webinars by subject-matter experts; informally, by hearing the voices of lived and living experience. The Council responds to inquiries from individuals, groups, and government. The Advisory Council does not have the mandate or resources to provide services or to advocate for individuals.



Alexia Riche and the Community Sector Network came to share our offices in 2023.



Office Manager Becky Tramley awarding Kiela Muirhead, our bookkeeper, a 20(+)-year service award

PRESENTATIONS

Council's Program Coordinator and Executive Director celebrated Equality Day with presentations to four classes of Grade 9 students at Birchwood Intermediate School (April 17)

Program Coordinator Michelle Jay and PEI Coalition for Women in Government Executive Director Sarah Outram gave a Women's History Month workshop presentation on "Votes for Women: The Next 100 Years" (October 27)

SOME WEBINARS & TRAINING

"Lessons Learned from the Nova Scotia Mass Casualty: Reflections from the Commission and the Community" (recorded version of the webinar, June 13)

"Human Trafficking 101" (September 25)

"Breaking Barriers: Unveiling the National Scorecard on Women's Economic Abuse in Canada" (September 26)

"Compagne de sensibilisations contre les violence genrées" (October 12)

"Not Just the Tip: Building Comfort and Confidence in Delivering Sexual Health Information" (October 12)

"Giving Voice: A Public Forum on Migrant Justice" Symposium (October 29)

"Neurobiology of Trauma - Intimate Partner Violence" with Dr. Lori Haskell (November 28 & 29)

"Stronger Communities: Gender-Based Violence and Mass casualties" webinar (November 28)

"Survivor-Led in Practice" webinars with the Pathways to Thrive project (February 6 & 7)

SPECIAL INQUIRIES

June 2023 saw release of a report on sexual harassment and toxic workplace culture at the University of Prince Edward Island. Because Council had been a voice for change in the university's response to sexual harassment, ED Jane Ledwell was called on as a spokesperson. She spoke in the media and also met with the interim President and the leadership team responding to the report (June 29). Jane applied to and was appointed to the Action Plan Advisory Group and served on this from September to November as a private citizen, but sharing Council resources as appropriate.

INQUIRIES

The Advisory Council does not have the mandate or resources to provide services or to advocate for individuals. We offer support with active listening, information, and referrals. The concerns women raise in individual inquiries often lead to policy analysis by Council to address underlying systemic issues. When possible, the Chair raises concerns from inquiries with the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. Inquiries are fewer and are increasingly diverse and specific. We wonder about the impact the 211 Service is having on directing individuals to appropriate services.

Inquiries or comments related to the following: expressing a lack of support for women in politics; need for services and housing for new parents at risk; concerns about a sexual perpetrator offering counselling and wellness services; woman experiencing harassment in a seniors' complex; concerns about effects of an international student who sexually assaulted a woman; an angry call about a rental conflict with a man; first responders concerned about sexist comment from an Island MLA; unsafe housing for a senior following Fiona storm; woman experiencing harassment within a political party; concerns about historic sexual violence and lack of support for survivors through justice and legal aid; concerns about grooming of teen girls by a school bus driver; lack of mediators for gender-related workplace conflict; anti-trans emails that originated outside PEI; concern about a Minister politicizing a public event meant to acknowledge survivors of violence; a concern that women with disabilities need more representation on Council; cyberbullying; financial abuse and coercive control.

Jane's public statements on UPEI's Rubin-Thomlinson report elicited a number of emails and conversations with people who had experiences of sexism, racism, and harassment at the university. Many calls requested information and requests related to ACSW programming: Purple Ribbon Campaign resources, the December 6th Montreal Massacre Memorial Service, Silent Witness silhouettes, IWD, and the Chairs Circle event.

NATIONAL EVENTS

The Equal Futures Network Gender Equality Summit 2023, "People, Perspectives, and Partnerships," took place in Whitehorse, Yukon, May 17 & 18. Program Coordinator Michelle Jay and Executive Direct Jane Ledwell attended in-person as a part of the Coalition for Women in Government's delegation. We are grateful to the Coalition, and we did a number of cross-team-building activities in addition to attending the conference. Council members Barb McDowall and Hsiao-Yu Liu represented Council at a special reception welcoming federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous ministers and officials responsible for the Status of Women, meeting in PEI (August 1).



Michelle Jay and Jane Ledwell wore purple for Family Violence Prevention Week while they were in Whitehorse, Yukon.



Kari Kruse, Michelle Jay, Jane Ledwell, and Sarah Outram at the Equal Futures Gender Equality Summit in Whitehorse.

Consultations & Events

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women participates in consultations and community events related to our mandate and mission. Items that are not easy to categorize under our strategic plan categories for action are included below and in the pages that follow. Some projects and events help advance another strategic priority set by Council members: to take part in energizing events.

● SOME COMMUNITY EVENTS

Aboriginal Women's Association Red Dress Walk for MMIWG (May 5)

Parks Canada tour and consultation regarding the Province House restoration project (June 1)

Launch of past-Chair Dianne Porter's book, *Unhistoric Acts: Inside the Women's Movement on PEI* (June 15)

Coalition for Women in Government's Legislative Assembly "sit-in in pink" to discourage a return to late-night legislative sittings (June 15)

Coalition for Women in Government's office warming and send-off for outgoing ED (June 27)

Reception celebration Canada's Famous Five display at Lefurgey Centre, Summerside (July 19)

Book launch of *Are We Friends Now?* queer youth anthology by PEERS and Acorn Press (July 24)

Emancipation Day recognitions hosted by the Black Cultural Society (August 1)

Strike in solidarity with Global Climate Strikes (Sept. 15)

AGMs of partner organizations, including PEERS Alliance (September 12), Literacy Alliance (September 19), Community Sector Network (September 22)

Aboriginal Women's Assoc. Sisters in Spirit Vigil (Oct. 4)

United Way PEI "United by Song" event (October 19)

Community Sector Network "Tea and Talk" (Nov. 1)

Launch of season 2 of the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation's "Island Digital Voices" (November 14)

Performance of *Provocation: A Play* celebrating the 40th anniversary of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (November 24)

PEERS Alliance/PRIDE PEI World AIDS Day recognition (December 1)

Community Sector Network holiday social (Dec. 13)

Coalition for Women in Government New Year's Levee (January 11)

BORN PEI celebration of midwifery arriving in PEI (Feb 25)

Migrant Workers' Rights Network's "Migrant Spring" event (March 16)

● OTHER CONSULTATIONS

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women is part of the New Museum Advocacy Group, which met throughout the year.

Representatives of Council and the Coalition for Women in Government who visited Whitehorse were inspired by the Yukon Period Pantry and began planning for a PEI Period Pantry in response, to distribute free menstrual products and information.

Council representatives checked in on meetings of Islanders for Proportional Representation in the fall of 2023, which is in a regrouping phase.

Council's ED takes part when possible in occasional meet-ups of not-for-profit EDs (November, January).

Council took on a more formal role connected to the movement for Migrant Workers' Rights in PEI and played a role planning their "Migrant Spring" event.

● SPEAK UP PROJECT

Women's Network PEI coordinates the "Speak Up" project to bring together not-for-profit leaders in the gender and equality-seeking community. Organizational representatives meet quarterly and share resources and strategies for speaking up on equity issues and to develop skills for collaborating and organizing.

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women



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