

BACKGROUND REPORT

*Results from Focus Groups
and Community Consultations*



Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women

EQUALITY REPORT CARD 2026

The PEIACSW acknowledges all women-identifying people in our understanding of “women” and strives to ensure gender non-binary, gender-diverse, and gender non-conforming people are included in the Council’s work.

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.

We pay our respects to Indigenous Mi’kmaq Elders and people who have cared for this land; past, present, and future. We stand in solidarity with the Indigenous community and collectively work to raise awareness of MMIWG2S+.

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Related publications:

- 2026 Equality Report Card Assessment Model: <https://peistatusofwomen.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/WEB-2026-Equality-Report-Card-Assessment-Model.pdf>
- 2026 Equality Report Card, Background Report, and French Language Summary <https://peistatusofwomen.ca/policy-research/equality-report-card-2026/>

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

The Equality Report Card process assesses Prince Edward Island's progress toward gender equality goals. Initiated by the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women in 2007, the Equality Report Card is unique in Canada.

As a cyclical assessment, the Equality Report Card evaluates the Government of Prince Edward Island's performance in key areas affecting women and gender-diverse individuals, serving as both a measurement tool and a roadmap for policy improvement. The project is rooted in the belief that "what gets measured, gets managed." By providing a snapshot of the current state of equality, the Council holds the provincial government accountable to its commitments.



I was appointed as the Chairperson for the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women in December 2024, arriving in time to be part of community consultations in the process to create the 2026 Equality Report Card. Throughout this journey, I have been truly impressed by the collaborative process and the progressive change for equality it has inspired within government. I am convinced that many of the initiatives credited in this 2026 report would not have taken place without the foundational work of past Advisory Council members on Report Cards dating back to 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2018, and 2022.

The assessment model for the 2026 Equality Report Card prioritizes intersectional feminism. This lens recognizes that a person's experience of inequality is shaped by overlapping identities, including race, ability, age, sexual orientation, gender, economic status, culture, religion, language, and so on. Our assessment process followed four key stages: data collection, community engagement with diverse groups, analysis across domains like safety and economic security, and a formal grading of government action.

The Equality Report Card is more than a document: it is a catalyst for systemic change. This work is only possible through the collective efforts of those who work diligently behind the scenes to ensure its accuracy and impact. I am deeply grateful for every member of the Council who made her voice heard throughout this process. I would like to thank the Chairpersons

before me who led vital parts of this journey, especially Serena Smith, who led the development of our new assessment model in 2024.

The Council and I would like to give special thanks to our dedicated team for their hard work and commitment to this project. To our Council Members, thank you for your strategic leadership and unwavering commitment to the people of Prince Edward Island. To the ACSW staff—former Executive Director Jane Ledwell, Executive Director Vanessa Bradley, Program Coordinator Michelle Jay, Research Coordinator Trish Altass, and Office Managers Caroline Galloway and Becky Tramley—thank you for the expertise, dedication, and rigorous analysis required to bring this model to life. We also extend our sincere thanks to the Interministerial Women’s Secretariat (IWS) for your essential partnership and ongoing collaboration in our shared goal of advancing gender equality.

Your engagement ensures that we continue to provide evidence-based advocacy that makes equality a lived reality. On behalf of the members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, I wish the government well in its important work to sustain equality gains and to advance new initiatives that make PEI a more equitable and inclusive place for all.



Hsiao-Yu Liu, Chairperson
May 2026

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION METHODS

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women gathered grassroots and community voices to help inform the 2026 Equality Report Card through five in-person focus group consultations, and two online community perceptions surveys.

Focus groups were arranged by invitation in collaboration with community organizations and with support from Council members. Discussions were led by the Council staff and Council members, who were also participants in some groups. Participants were not asked to describe their identities or genders, though most self-identified as women or gender diverse people through the course of the discussions. No participants self-identified as men. A total of 52 people participated in the focus groups. The five focus groups included the following:

- Women's Network PEI: Senior Women's Group (Charlottetown, May 2025)
- The Aboriginal Women's Association (Lennox Island, June 2025)
- Rural women of varied backgrounds (Tignish, July 2025)
- The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's Past Chairperson group (Charlottetown September 2025)
- Actions Femmes: Francophone women of varied backgrounds. This focus group was conducted in French (Summerside, October 2025)

The online surveys explored respondents' views and experiences of the topic areas outlined in the assessment model, and provided space for open ended responses. Invitations to complete both surveys were sent by email to representatives from approximately 90 community organizations connected to equality and diversity work.

The first survey was conducted from January to March 2024. A total of 48 survey responses were submitted representing 32 distinct community-based organizations. Recommendations were also gathered for focus group discussions.

The second survey was available from October-December 2025. A total of 44 survey responses were submitted representing 30 different community-based organizations.

SELF-REPORTED DIVERSITY: SURVEY RESPONSES

As part of the community perceptions survey, participants were offered the opportunity to describe themselves and their intersecting identity factors. Responses to the identity questions were not required. Responses received were as follows:

Gender

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Women | 10 | 6 |
| Female | 23 | 23 |
| Cisgender women | 5 | 4 |
| She/Her | 2 | 1 |
| Male | 3 | 5 |
| Cis-male | 1 | 1 |
| Fluid or Non-Binary | 4 | 3 |
| Transgender | 0 | 2 |
| Trans man | 0 | 1 |
| Trans woman | 0 | 1 |

Sexuality

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Queer | 6 | 4 |
| 2SLGBTQ+ | 5 | 7 |
| Heterosexual or Straight | 3 | 0 |
| Pansexual | 0 | 1 |
| Bisexual | 0 | 1 |

Relationship Status

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Married | 9 | 7 |
| Common Law | 1 | 2 |
| Single | 3 | 5 |
| Widowed | 0 | 1 |

Age

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 20 - 29 years | 5 | 4 |
| 30 - 39 years | 3 | 2 |
| 40 - 49 years | 3 | 1 |
| 50 - 59 years | 2 | 1 |
| 60 - 69 years | 1 | 0 |
| 70+ | 1 | 0 |
| Senior | 1 | 3 |
| Mid-life | 1 | 0 |
| Post-menopausal | 1 | 0 |
| Middle-aged | 0 | 1 |
| Gen X | 0 | 1 |

Ethnicity, Language, and Citizenship

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Acadian | 2 | 0 |
| Arab | 1 | 0 |
| Canadian Citizen | 4 | 1 |
| Caucasian | 1 | 2 |
| Creole | 0 | 1 |
| English (1st or preferred language) | 10 | 10 |
| 1st Generation Canadian | 1 | 0 |
| Francophone/French | 2 | 2 |
| Immigrant | 3 | 1 |
| Indigenous or First Nations | 1 | 3 |
| Muslim | 2 | 0 |
| Racialized | 1 | 0 |
| White | 8 | 7 |
| Biracial | 1 | 1 |
| South Asian | 0 | 1 |
| Black | 0 | 1 |
| Minority Ethnic Group member | 0 | 1 |
| Chinese | 0 | 1 |

Family and Caregiving

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Parent | 6 | 1 |
| Mother | 0 | 2 |
| Single Parent | 2 | 1 |
| Single Mother | 0 | 2 |
| Parent to a child with disabilities | 0 | 1 |
| Grandmother | 1 | 0 |
| Childless by choice | 1 | 0 |
| Care of Seniors | 1 | 0 |
| Mom of adult children | 0 | 1 |
| Expecting Mother | 0 | 1 |
| No children | 0 | 1 |

Employment and Education

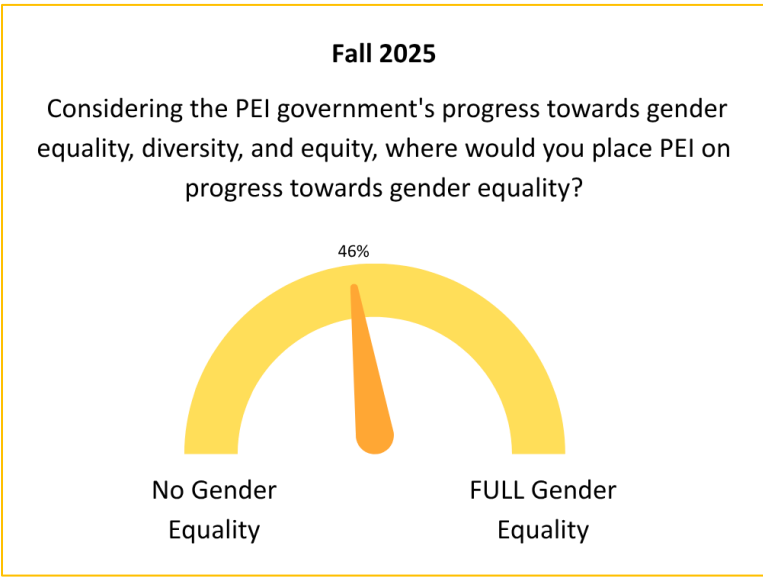
| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Employed | 2 | 3 |
| Employed full-time | 6 | 4 |
| Employed part-time | 1 | 0 |
| Low-income | 2 | 0 |
| Freelance worker | 1 | 0 |
| Self-employed | 1 | 0 |
| Business owner | 1 | 0 |
| Executive position | 0 | 1 |
| Student | 2 | 2 |
| Retired | 2 | 1 |
| College educated | 0 | 1 |
| Middle class | 0 | 2 |
| Financially challenged/ experienced poverty | 1 | 1 |

Health and Disability

| | Survey 1 (Fall 2024) | Survey 2 (Winter 2025) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Able-bodied | 4 | |
| Autistic | 0 | 1 |
| Living with chronic illness | 1 | 1 |
| Medically but not legally disabled | 0 | 1 |
| Neurodivergent | 3 | |
| Person with a disability or disabilities | 5 | 10 |
| Person with a mental health related disability or mental illness | 3 | 1 |
| Person with a hidden disability | 1 | 0 |

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS: SUMMARY OF SURVEY & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

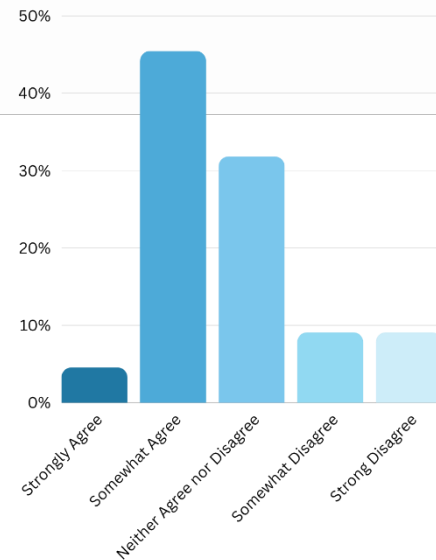
Survey respondents were asked to consider the PEI government's general progress towards gender equality, diversity, and equity, across all categories that affect equality. They were asked where they would place PEI on general progress towards gender equality on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is no gender equality and 100 is full gender equality. While the overall average response to this question increased by four points in fall 2025 (46%) from the previous survey in winter 2024 (42%), we note that both averages fall below 50%, and are well below the threshold indicated by 73/100 overall score of the 2026 Equality Report Card.



The following sections explore some of the themes identified during the community consultation process. Reflections and quotes from the focus groups and survey comments are highlighted throughout, bringing to the forefront the lived and living experiences of those in the PEI community. All quotations included in this report and the Equality Report Card are anonymized and are edited for length, clarity, and/or grammatical consistency. Some quotations are translated from French. All charts reflect feedback received through the community consultation survey collected in the fall of 2025.

MAKING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION A PRIORITY

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: Gender and diversity analysis is being used by the PEI government to understand different effects of existing and proposed legislation, policies, programs, and budgets on Island residents of all genders and diverse groups.

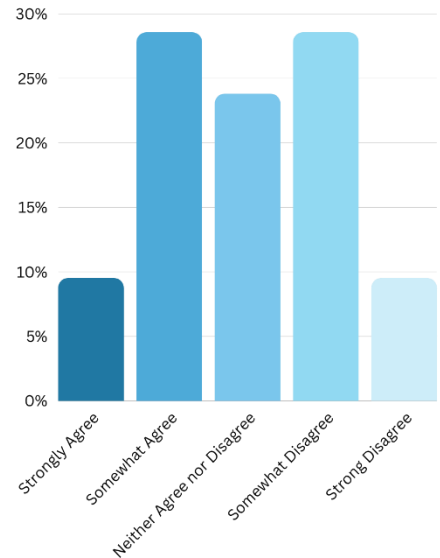


“I appreciate that some efforts have been made to understand the needs of women and gender-diverse people through such things as the Health Strategy for Women and Islanders Who Are Gender Diverse, but ... this is one small piece of the pie and frankly I have not seen enough action. Lip service is not enough.”

Education and Awareness

- The importance of raising awareness and education about diversity and inclusion from an early age was highlighted. One participant noted that empathy and understanding needs to begin with educating young children to be sustainable and effective.
- The need to raise awareness of gender inequalities in society and gender aspects of issues (physical differences, differences in income/poverty, etc.) was also identified.
- Some encouraged further support for and promotion of days of reflection, such as The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and the Trans Day of Remembrance, to raise public awareness.

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The PEI government is making active efforts to prevent systemic discrimination and remove barriers to social inclusion. Additionally, they are substantially addressing exclusion and discrimination based on gender, race and ethnicity, ability, age, language, and other diversity factors.



Growing Anti-Equality Movements Across Canada

- Concerns about a rise of anti-equality, anti-LGBTQI2S+, and anti-feminist individuals and groups promoting hate were shared by many.
- Online harassment and bullying were highlighted as becoming more frequent and harmful, particularly for young people.
- Participants expressed that diversity and inclusion should be a priority for government to stand up against anti-equity, anti-LGBTQI2S+ and anti-feminist actions.

Funding for Not-For-Profit Organizations

- Many participants highlighted the important work of not-for-profit organizations in our community, and appreciated government funding for these programs and encouraged government to continue or expand funding.
- Concerns were shared about public policy, austerity, and the impacts of potential reductions in available funding, particularly for women's organizations.

“I think they are doing a good job of providing operational funding to a lot of non-profit organizations working within diversity, equity, and inclusion. I think they have good policies internally but I am uncertain if those policies are translating fully into action on the government's part.”

Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

Many participants acknowledged that government has taken important steps toward reconciliation with Indigenous people in recent years. However, it was also expressed that more work needs to be done.

“They have appointed some strong contact people and advocates. Indigenous relations are incredible, they're always there to assist.”

- Many expressed that government needs to do more regarding Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirited (MMIWG2S+), such as a special team, search crew, more media attention, and providing more funding.
- The importance and value of having an Indigenous Relations Coordinator in government was highlighted. This coordinator was generally felt to be very communicative and responsive.
- The inclusion of smudging and Indigenous opening ceremonies in presentations and workshops was acknowledged and appreciated.
- It was felt that providing more supports for Indigenous women entrepreneurs will help to empower them to thrive within the business community and PEI economy.
- Some felt that government needs to do more to support cultural initiatives, such as drumming groups, to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Multi-year core funding for Indigenous organizations, such as the Aboriginal Women’s Association, is critical for these organizations to continue to provide culturally appropriate programming and support in communities.
- A need was identified for greater transparency regarding how the government is advancing progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and the MMIWG2S+ Calls to Justice.

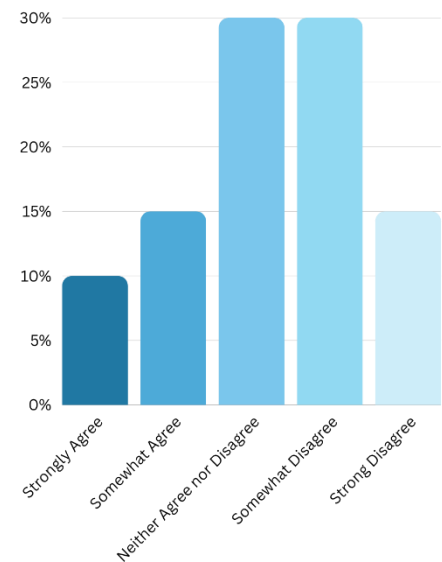
“Communicating with them, you know them, face to face, we all know (coordinator) is responsive, she attends the workshops. Not someone who sits up in the government office, you get to know her.”

“One critical thing is that there be Indigenous mentorship for Indigenous women. Often when they went into mainstream business, they felt left out. They wanted people to know them for who they are.”

Women in Government

Question 11: The PEI government is actively removing barriers to women’s leadership in elected and appointed decision-making.

“It still feels like often steps taken are performative or surface level instead of getting to the root cause and addressing patriarchy in government, leadership, and programs.”



- Many felt that more should be done to ensure representation of women and gender diverse people at all levels of government.
- One participant highlighted that 50% of all levels of government should be made up of women and gender diverse people.

Temporary Foreign Workers

- Participants pointed out that Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) are vulnerable to nationalist ideas, exploitation and abuse, with women TFWs at increased risk of violence and sexual harassment. Many expressed the need for more government support and protections for these workers.

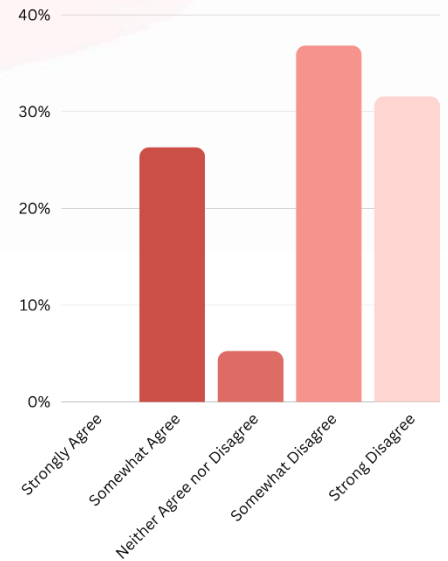
Appreciation for the Interministerial Women’s Secretariat, and the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- There was widespread appreciation for the important roles of both the Interministerial Women’s Secretariat and the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women shared throughout the community engagement sessions.

“It’s so nice to have that equality report and to see the pillars and how they line up.”

ELIMINATING POVERTY

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The provincial government is working towards a province where everyone is able to meet their basic needs at all times, including access to enough healthy food and to affordable, accessible, appropriate, and safe housing. The PEI government has set a high priority on improving the health, dignity, choice, and wellbeing of poor and economically vulnerable Island residents.

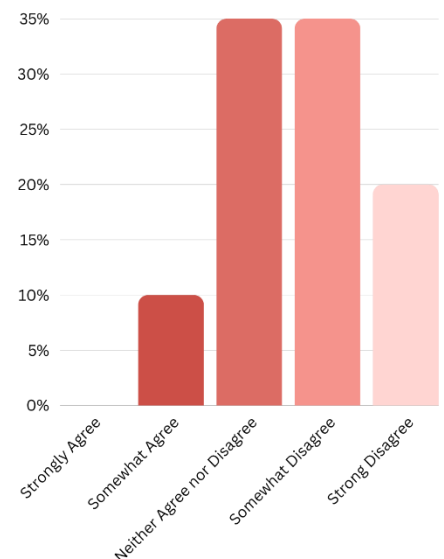


Basic Income Guarantee

Implementing a basic income guarantee program accessible to all those who need it was overwhelmingly viewed as essential to fully eliminate poverty on PEI.

- Many expressed that basic income would have far-reaching positive impacts across many social issues, and should be prioritized by government.
- Poverty was often identified as being a root cause of other issues, such as contributing to mental health challenges, and a lack of support for caregivers.
- During one focus group, participants agreed that taxes should be increased on luxury goods, such as owning multiple houses and cars, to help pay for a basic income program.
- Several participants stated that “people should be prioritized over profits”.
- Child poverty, in particular, was frequently emphasized by participants as a major concern.
- Several participants noted that aging women should be included in Basic Income Guarantee (BIG), and should not be cut off at 65. Many senior women are widows who are at risk of experiencing isolation, and a lack of income to support themselves.
- Participants discussed how BIG could take the surveillance out of social assistance, reduce stigma, and increase dignity.
- One participant noted that BIG could be helpful to support people during environmental disasters.

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The provincial government is effectively negotiating with the federal government to prioritize the development of a basic income program for PEI.



“BIG, but it has to operate differently than our social services program. If you get more, it gets clawed back. The punitive part has to end.”

“Women of a generation 60 and older have had lower wages, contract work, part time work. I read a book that said children cause women's poverty. Without BIG, it's going to deteriorate the lives of women as they age, we aren't addressing that age group appropriately financially. It rolls out a whole list of issues.”

Women and Work

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The PEI government’s workforce development plans and programs, and labour standards are based on fairness for workers and strive towards living wages and employment equity as their fundamental goals.

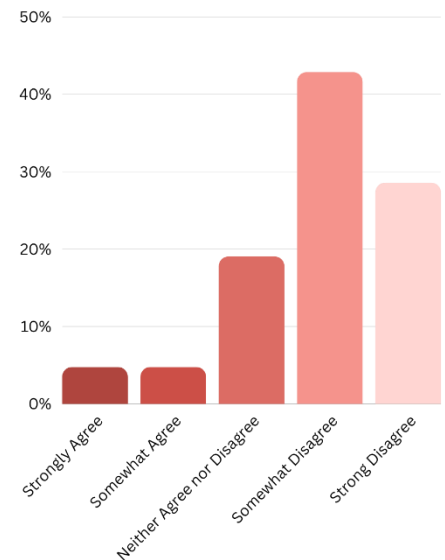
“The glass ceiling is still very much present, with few women in jobs in management.”

- Though PEI's gendered pay gap is smaller than others in the region, overall pay levels are also lower, masking persistent gender inequalities.
- Several participants discussed inequalities and challenges women continue to face in workplaces and in the labour market, such as sexual discrimination, harassment, and the double day of labour.
- Many felt more needs to be done to support caregivers and families, especially families with children who have disabilities, so that women can succeed and thrive in the labour market.

“A lot of young families are having issues caring for their children with disabilities. Some daycares are not taking children with disabilities. Poverty is the root of these other issues.”

“So many of these things are interlocked: wage parity would go a long distance. Finances enable women to get out of bad situations.”

“Every day I see many women, full of wisdom, resourceful, and doing such a good job, but still edging on poverty because of the education piece and a lack of sustainable employment.”



Affordable and Safe Housing

- Participants widely agreed that a lack of affordable and safe housing was a major concern. It was also discussed that this lack of affordable housing impacts women differently, particularly those who are caring for children.
- The importance of government’s role in monitoring and regulating rent increases, short-term rentals, and “renovictions”, was highlighted by many. The need for a rental registry was also discussed.
- In some focus groups there was a general consensus that the government should step in to create and maintain affordable housing, and that the private sector can’t be trusted to do so.
- Several participants noted the importance of safe and affordable housing for those who are survivors of gender-based violence.
- Housing models that incorporate low-income housing into buildings with market rental units, rather than stand-alone low-income housing, were generally preferred.
- Some participants noted that many buildings aren’t accessible to those with disabilities. For example, it was discussed that the lack of elevators in some buildings can prevent seniors from taking part in social events or accessing services.
- One participant discussed the need for co-op housing.
- Another participant expressed concerns that many seniors can no longer afford to live in their homes.

“Builders and developers define affordable in their own heads. They use a definition that if it’s 15% less than the market price it’s “affordable”. That’s not affordable. Affordable is what people can afford, what a single mom can afford. People are taking on second jobs because the market has tripled.”

“Everything seems to be on the side of the owners and builders and developers, not the people, and there seems to be more and more of this going on. It certainly affects women and families. You can imagine a single mom living with kids. Rent is going way up, but how are they going to manage, with everything more expensive, because social assistance isn’t going up. Everything in food seems to double in the grocery store all the time.”

“There was a consultation on short term rentals. A landlord flipping houses was positing it as a positive thing that they were taking rundown buildings and turning it into something beautiful. I wish it was still ramshackle but safe and warm for people. They’re kicking out disabled, elderly, to have a tourist rental. They’re unhousing the most vulnerable people.”

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVERS AND CAREGIVING

Question 35: The PEI government acknowledges, values, and invests in the frequently unpaid and underpaid work of caregivers, often women, who care for children or adults, including seniors.

Before and After-School Care

- It was noted by several participants that there is a lack of funding for before and after-school care for children.
- Some stressed the need for more childcare support for single mothers in particular, especially survivors of abusive relationships.

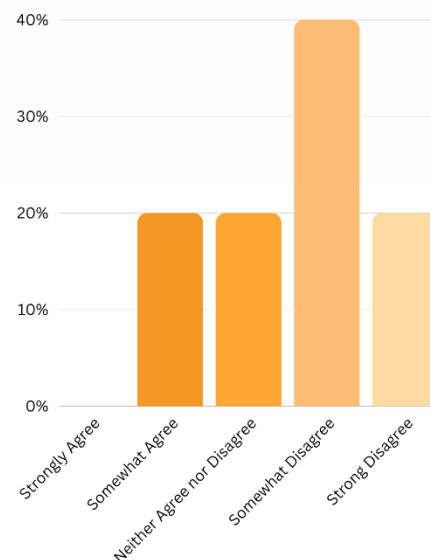
“Regarding children, PEI’s agreement with the federal government does not include before school care or after-school programs. There was a consultant hired, recommended funding for before and after school. It was a promise of the King government. There has been no action.”

Support for Parents and Grandparents

- Some participants felt parental leave should be extended or there should be more funding to support parents to stay at home with their children.
- It was also identified that more supports are needed for grandparents who are taking on childcare responsibilities.

Public Schools and Supports for Teachers

- Some participants felt that teachers need more help in the classroom, especially when kids who have high needs are integrated.
- One participant noted that teachers face high expectations from parents, which can contribute to teacher stress and burnout.
- Some participants noted that menstrual products were not available at all schools on PEI. This is an issue for students, but also for teachers and staff. For example, women in perimenopause can have inconsistent or unexpected bleeding and require menstrual supplies unexpectedly.



“Families have so much pressure on them. We look to government for everything, a lot gets dumped to schools and they can't handle everything. Good teachers are leaving the schools.”

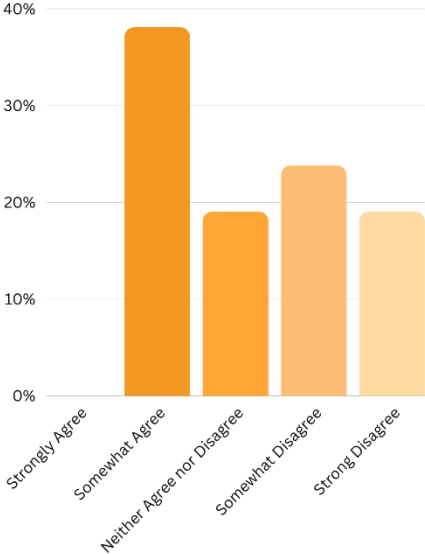
Homecare Supports

- It was widely felt that homecare supports to help seniors stay in their homes longer are a benefit to seniors and their families, with adult children often being in the caregiver role.
- Further expanding homecare supports could help those caring for their loved ones.

“Home support does provide some of that support, but they would never be there in the middle of the night to turn me over to help me go to the bathroom.”

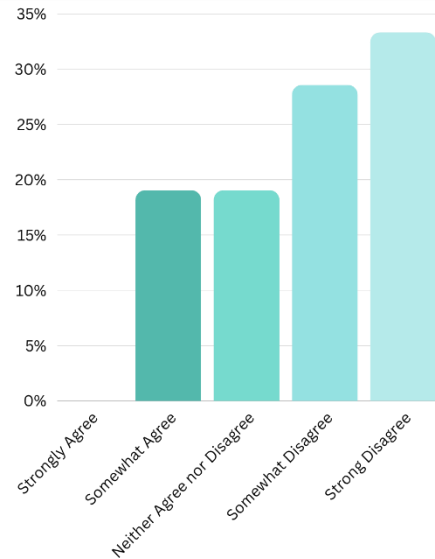
“Wouldn't it be to the advantage of the government if they had more home care when they're so lacking Manors. Everybody's going to the hospital and staying there for months at a time.”

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree
→ **Strongly Disagree:** The PEI government invests in affordable and accessible caregiving services, including childcare, eldercare, homecare, long-term care, and respite services, with the goals to increase equitable access to paid work, education, and training opportunities, and supports the mental health and wellbeing of caregivers.



WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE'S PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The PEI government is sustaining a strong system for primary care, balanced by proactive, upstream investment in wellness and health promotion. Government's plans and actions are rooted in health equity and focus on public health measures ahead of individual behaviours.



Primary Health Care Providers

- Many participants lacked access to a family doctor, with some being without a primary healthcare provider for several years. Not having a family doctor or primary care provider was viewed as a barrier to accessing healthcare services.
- Some had also experienced challenges accessing MAPLE online healthcare services. Participants in one focus group discussed that seniors in particular often have difficulty using MAPLE, and that having a program to help people learn how to use Maple would be helpful.
- For those who have a family doctor, some shared it can take weeks for them to get an appointment.
- Concerns were shared that newcomers to PEI without a family doctor might face additional barriers to understanding the healthcare system and how to access care.
- For those connected with a patient medical home, experiences were generally very positive, with participants appreciating the access to a range of specialized care within a medical home.
- Some participants emphasized the need to strengthen efforts to recruit and retain nurse practitioners, as they can provide frontline care for a wide range of health concerns. They also noted that, because nurse practitioners are predominantly women, supporting this workforce contributes positively to women's employment across PEI.

“Nurses are a better return on investment for providing front-line care. Good jobs for women, and better access to healthcare for the public.”

Walk-in Clinics

- The need for more walk-in clinics was highlighted, as wait times to access care through walk-in services are often very long or inaccessible as daily timeslots are filled quickly.
- Seniors are often unable to stand in long lines at walk-in clinics, particularly when lines are outside in the cold.

“It is a hot dumpster fire...I know people trying to use MAPLE for complex health issues. Every month you have to go through this huge rigamarole even to get a basic prescription.”

Specialized Services and Preventive Care

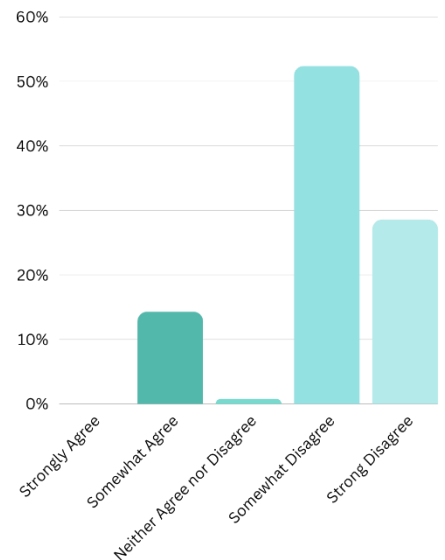
- Some participants felt there should be easier access to preventative care with less restrictions, such as the age 40+ restriction on self-referrals for mammograms.
- Being able to access preventative care screening and support in local communities was identified as critical for maintaining health and wellbeing.
- Many shared concerns about a lack of information, support, and care for perimenopause and menopause and wanted healthcare professionals to have access to more training on women’s health and for more women to have access to trained professionals who know women’s health.
- One participant noted that accessing complementary medicine, such as naturopathy, is not covered through the public system. As a result, certain services—like blood tests and dietary supplements—are not covered, or coverage is only available through a primary healthcare provider. This creates a particular challenge for individuals who do not have access to a primary healthcare provider.
- One participant expressed concerns that PEI is lacking in gender-affirming care options, noting that surgery is not available in PEI.
- Having access to specialized mental health programs, such as the [Municipal Leaders Talk Program](#), was generally felt to be a benefit for those who are able to access these services. At the same time, concerns were expressed that too many people fall through the gaps of available specialized services and are unable to access the treatment and mental health support they need to thrive.

“Used to be alcohol, and weed, but now it's different drugs, young people going out and getting help, and a month later they're back where they were. We had to do something because there was nothing for us. AA helped a little, but we had to do something for ourselves so we got into drumming. We brought it back. Brought the culture back. The kids will teach the kids.”

Public Nursing Homes

- A few participants noted that there are long wait times for public nursing home placements for those in need of care. It was generally felt that more investment in staffing for long-term care was needed.
- Participants discussed the long wait times that patients have to endure, including seniors being unable to stand in long lines at clinics in the cold, and long waits for specialists and even basic prescriptions.

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: People can access health services with dignity and without judgement, discrimination, or stigma, including system-wide support and help for mental health and addictions, timely care in crisis situations, and also care and support across the lifespan.



Mental Health and Addiction Services

- Several participants felt there is less stigma to seek help and talk about mental health issues today than there was even 10 years ago.
- Some also expressed that not all primary care providers are responsive to mental health concerns.
- The need for more supports and services for people struggling with addictions was also identified. Participants in one focus group discussed how addictions programs are not doing enough to break the cyclical nature of addiction.
- Implementation of further harm reduction approaches was encouraged by many.
- Monthly programming for trauma relief was discussed as an important initiative. One participant noted that addictions are often a way of self-medicating.
- Some participants experienced challenges accessing mental health services through the drop-in model. Having to see a new clinician each visit can make it difficult to build trust. Additionally, having to re-tell one's story each visit can lead to further trauma.
- The need for increased staffing in mental health facilities was also discussed.
- It was highlighted that there is limited access to counselling services in some local communities on PEI. It can also be difficult to find information about the services that are available, particularly for those without a family doctor or primary care provider.
- Some felt that support for community-led groups should also be increased, valuing being able to support each other, talk openly and share your thoughts and concerns with others. Funding to support these types of groups is needed for things like venue rental, food, transportation, and childcare.

- Several participants wanted to see more funding for seniors' groups to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Newcomers were also identified as being at increased risk of isolation. It was noted that the Community Navigators program offers opportunities for newcomers and established Islanders to connect.

“I think a lot of people feel that they're less of a person. If they're, you know, if they're depressed, if they have things that they can't talk about. When you feel you're not worthy, then your esteem gets pretty low.”

French Language Medical Services

“It is sad to see that Canada has 2 official languages, but this is not developed on PEI.”

- The need for more French speaking family doctors was highlighted. This is particularly challenging when access to family doctors overall is limited.
- Challenges accessing specialized care in French in areas of mental health support, obstetrics, gynecology, and dentistry were also mentioned. One participant waited three months with tooth pain before being able to see a Francophone dentist.
- It was noted that being able to speak in your first language in cases of trauma, care or emotional distress, is critical.
- One participant experienced feelings of isolation with lack of care in French for childbirth.
- French-language or bilingual “neighbourhoods” in some provincial long-term care facilities were highlighted as critical for wellbeing.

Children’s Activities and Sports

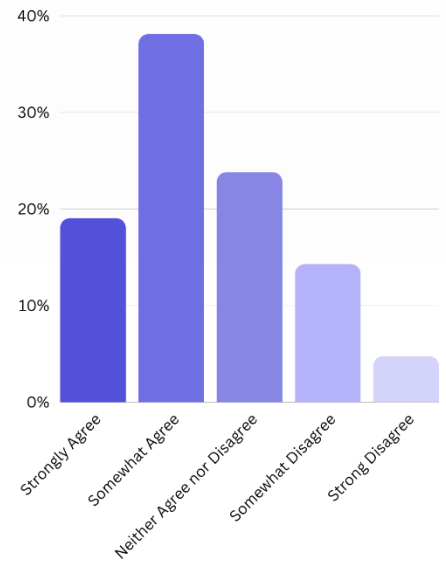
- Many highlighted the importance of finding ways to keep children active and connected to their community.
- Funding for sports and recreation activities for children was viewed favorably.
- Programs held at a local library or by a municipality were seen as important and valuable. It was also noted that summer students are needed to provide these activities.
- The library was also highlighted as a space where parents can connect. Parents of children who play hockey have social connections with each other as well.

“She played hockey this winter, but after the hockey season was over, all of her teammates were into spring hockey, and then into summer hockey camp. Well, I couldn't afford that. She felt lesser than, and I saw that.”

ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree → Strongly Disagree: The PEI government is working towards ending violence against women and children, other gender-based violence, and all forms of family violence.

“For fifty years we have been talking about ending GBV [gender-based-violence], and services and education have been developed, but the numbers are still there. We need to talk to victims of violence, to identify the problem, and find new ideas of solutions to tackle the issue because it is not going away. We are spending lots of money helping periodically but there is someone taking their place as soon as they are gone.”

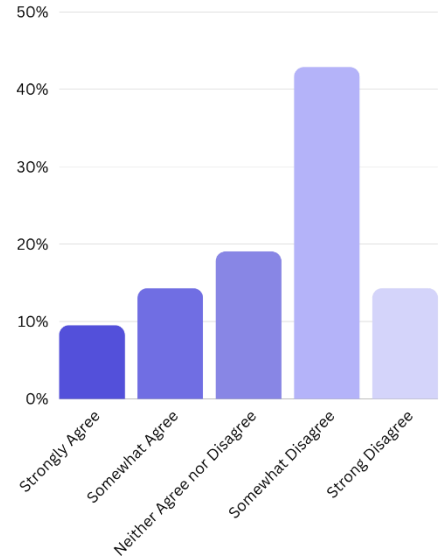


- Multiple participants highlighted the importance of violence prevention, and supporting survivors of gender-based violence
- Some expressed frustration that gender-based violence continues in high numbers despite efforts. They stressed the importance of listening to survivors to create new solutions to ending gender-based violence.
- One participant noted that verbal abuse that women face in the workplace is also a form of gender-based violence that has to be addressed by changing attitudes through early education.
- The role of Family Violence Prevention Outreach Coordinators, particularly in rural areas, was viewed as important for the community.
- Concerns were expressed about whether Police Services should be the first point of contact in situations of gender-based violence, and that all police officers should receive training to manage such situations.
- There was an expressed need for more women’s shelters, as well as 24/7 supports for those fleeing violence.
- It was felt that more education on gender-based violence and how to manage emotions in a healthy way should be included in the public-school curriculum.
- The Premier’s Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention was felt by many to be valuable.

“It may not be physical, but there's a lot of control. You know, men exert a lot of power, emotional, and mental abuse.”

“I lived in (cities), if I heard the neighbour's wife yelling, I'd probably pick up the phone myself. But here, you sort of mind your own business because you could target yourself.”

Survey respondents were asked to choose from Strongly Agree
→ **Strongly Disagree:** Government services are gender appropriate, culturally sensitive, trauma-informed, and do not revictimize victims or survivors. They are providing effective services for people who cause harm that support them to be accountable.



APPENDIX A

Members of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2023—2026

The following appointed members of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of women contributed to the model development and delivery of this Report Card project from 2023 to the present. They were supported by staff members Office Manager Becky Tramley, Office Manager Caroline Galloway, Program Coordinator Michelle Jay, Research Coordinator Trish Altass, Executive Director Jane Ledwell, and Executive Director Vanessa Bradley.

Those who were members to 2024, led by Chairperson Serena Smith, developed and finalized the assessment model, including the categories, the statements of expectation for each category, and the lists of equality gains to sustain.

Those who were members in 2024 to 2026, led by Chairperson Hsiao-Yu Liu, participated in all aspects of the final assessment and grade-setting, using a consensus decision-making model. They saw the Report Card publications through to completion.

We thank each of the following present and past members of the Council for their contributions:

- Hsiao-Yu Liu, member from January 2023, Chairperson November 2024 to the present
- Marie-Soleil Hutchinson, member from October 2023 to the present
- Tamara Alnsor, member from December 2024 to the present
- Alexia Riche, member from December 2024 to the present
- Vanessa Sierra, member from December 2024 to the present
- Garima Mishra, member from March 2021 to March 2026
- Felicia Carey, member from April 2024 to March 2026
- Alexandria (Allie) Cantwell, member from April 2024 to January 2026
- Jenny MacDougall, member from December 2024 to January 2026
- Serena Smith, member from October 2019, Chairperson to November 2024
- Barb McDowall, member from October 2019 to November 2024
- Emily Rutledge, member from October 2019 to November 2024
- Gaylene Carragher, member from October 2019 to November 2024

The members of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women are grateful to all those who have supported the creation of the Prince Edward Island Equality Report Card 2026.

APPENDIX B

Timeline for the 2026 Equality Report Card

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| APR 2023 | A general election was held to elect the members of the 67th General Assembly of Prince Edward Island. The PC party led by Premier Dennis King formed a majority government. |
| JAN-FEB 2024 | After consultation with the Interministerial Women's Secretariat and the Task Force for Advancing Gender Equity and Diversity, the 2026 Equality Report Card Assessment Model was finalized and shared with all departments of government and posted publicly on the Advisory Council on the Status of Women website. |
| JAN-MAR 2024 | A Community Perceptions Survey was distributed to a wide range community-based organizations on PEI. |
| FEB 2025 | Detailed questionnaires were distributed to each government department requesting their responses in topic areas as outlined in the 2026 Equality Report Card Assessment Model. |
| MAY-OCT 2025 | Five focus group discussions were conducted in partnership with community organizations and Council members. |
| OCT-DEC 2025 | A second Community Perceptions Survey was distributed to a wide range community-based organizations on PEI. |
| DEC 2025 | All Government Departmental responses to the Equality Report Card questionnaires were submitted to the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. |
| JAN 2026 | Council members and staff reviewed all government departmental responses in full, including responses for each of the sustained goals, aspirational goals, and new progress items. They also reviewed community consultation notes and survey submissions. Each Council member and staff then completed an internal survey in which they reflected on each of the sustained and aspirational goals. Additionally, the Council executive met three times to review and consider each new progress item submitted by the government, and make recommendations for the Council's consideration. |
| FEB 2026 | The Council met for a full day to determine the grades for the 2026 Equality Report Card. The internal survey results were shared with the Council for each sustained and aspirational goal. The Council then discussed each item in detail, referring back to the government submissions and seeking out additional information when needed. The Council discussed the executive's recommendations for allocating new progress item grades, and provided feedback on areas they felt should or should not be included at either full or half points. By the end of the day, consensus was reached on all individual item grades allocated and the final grade total. |
| MAR 2026 | Staff prepared a draft final version of the Equality Report Card, based on the grades and rationale agreed upon by consensus of the Council. Council members were invited to review the final draft and share their feedback during the March Council meeting. |
| APR-MAY 2026 | The draft report as approved by consensus of the Council was then shared with IWS and the Task Force for Advancing Gender Equity and Diversity, who were invited to review the report and provide feedback for the Council to consider. All feedback provided by government representatives was shared with Council members who then voted on proposed revisions and reached consensus. |

APPENDIX C

PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women *2026 Report Card Consultations* **Semi-Structured Focus Group Guide**

We acknowledge that 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 and their home today and since time immemorial. Epekwitk is covered by the historic Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women operates at arms-length from government to promote gender equality for all Islanders and to support women's full and active participation in the social, legal, cultural, economic, and political life in the province. We include all women-identifying people in our understanding of our role and include gender minorities in our work.

The Advisory Council's mandate is to advise the provincial government and educate the public. A key activity is monitoring the PEI government's overall actions towards gender equality over time.

The Council presents the results of their assessment in the Equality Report Card, published every few years. The next Report Card is slated for release in 2026. This focus group is a part of the community consultation process to inform the Report Card.

Information that would identify individuals or organizations will be excluded from or anonymized in any reports produced from this focus group. As part of this process, personal information collected under section 31(c) of Prince Edward Island's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) Act as it relates to and is necessary for the purpose of community research by the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women and will be used to inform the 2026 Equality Report Card. If you have any questions about the collection of this personal information, you may contact Advisory Council staff at info@peistatusofwomen.ca.

The topics we will be discussing during this focus group relate to perceptions and experiences of gender equality on PEI, including consideration of diversity and identities that intersect with gender identities.

We would like to audio-record the focus group so we accurately capture all of the ideas shared. Only the PEI advisory council staff will hear the recordings, and all recordings will be deleted once the 2026 Equality Report Card has been published. We will also be taking written notes during the focus group. Any quotations used in the report card will be anonymized and paraphrased comments will be made non-identifiable/non-attributable.

Question: Is anyone feeling uncomfortable with us recording the focus group? (Do not record if anyone is uncomfortable)

The 2026 Equality Report Card will assess government progress towards gender equality goals in five broad categories.

(Slide or Handout with 5 categories)

- 1) Making Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion a Priority;
- 2) Ending Gender-Based Violence;
- 3) Women's and Gender Diverse People's Mental and Physical Health;
- 4) Supports for Caregivers and Caregiving; and
- 5) Eliminating Poverty.

We are unlikely to have time to discuss each of these categories in detail, so we are going to take a few minutes to identify which topics are of more interest to this group. If we don't have time to discuss each topic area today, you will also have the opportunity to provide feedback in writing after the focus group, either today or by email.

Question: Please share your name and what two category areas you are most interested in discussing today (record category preferences)

(Order topics with the group to identify priorities- ask the following sets of questions in the order identified by the group as time allows)

1) Making Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion a Priority

a) In what ways is the government of PEI making diversity, equity and inclusion a priority?
(Topic Prompts)

- i) Meaningful consultation with diversity groups?
- ii) Partnerships with community organizations?
- iii) Preventing systemic discrimination?
- iv) Removing barriers to social inclusion and/or women's leadership?

b) Should the government of PEI be doing more to make diversity, equity and inclusion a priority? If yes, what should they be doing?

2) Ending Gender-Based Violence

a) What is working well to help prevent and end Gender-Based Violence on PEI?

(Topic Prompts)

- i) Support for organizations
- ii) Prevention work in communities to eliminate root causes

- b) What more should be done to prevent and end Gender-Based Violence on PEI?
- c) What is working well to support people who have experienced or are experiencing Gender-Based Violence on PEI?

(Topic Prompts)

- i) Government programs are gender appropriate, culturally sensitive, and trauma informed.
- ii) Access to therapeutic court options, restorative approaches
- iii) Timely treatment and support
- d) Should more be done to support people who have experienced or are experiencing Gender-Based Violence on PEI? If yes, what more should be done?

3) Women's and Gender Diverse People's Mental and Physical Health

- a) What is working well on PEI to meet the healthcare needs of women and gender diverse people?

(Topic Prompts)

- i) Whole body, holistic approach
- ii) Supports and celebrates diversity
- iii) Access services with dignity and without judgement
- b) What more can be done on PEI to meet the healthcare needs of women and gender diverse people?
- c) Should the PEI government be doing more to respond to the social determinants of health, such as income, gender, language, and culture, as well as the impacts of climate change and environmental factors? If yes, what should government be doing?

4) Supports for Caregivers and Caregiving

- a) There are many ways that people engage in caregiving, such as childcare, eldercare and supporting people with disabilities. We also know that women are more likely to engage in caregiving. What is working well on PEI to support caregivers?

(Topic Prompts)

- i) Increasing supports not burdens for caregivers
- ii) Investing in affordable and accessible services
- iii) Collective care: emergency preparedness, climate change adaptation, support for the voluntary sector
- b) Should the PEI government be doing more to support caregivers? If yes, what should government be doing?
 - i) Connections between caregiving and a well-supported labour force

5) Eliminating Poverty

- a) What is working well on PEI to support women and gender diverse people who are experiencing or who have experienced poverty?
- b) What more can be done to support women and gender diverse people in PEI who are experiencing or who have experienced poverty?

(Topic Prompts)

- i) BIG
 - ii) Meaningful consultation with people living in, or who have experienced poverty
 - iii) Minimum wage is a Living Wage
 - iv) Food security programs
- c) What is working well to support the elimination of poverty on PEI?
 - d) Should the PEI government be doing more to eliminate poverty? If yes, what should they be doing?

Conclusion: Is there anything more anyone would like to say about gender equality on PEI?



B-

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