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Advisory Council on the  
Status of Women

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**COLLABORATIVE SUBMISSION FROM  
THE PEI ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
AND THE COALITION FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP  
TO THE MGA CONSULTATION**

**May 15, 2025**

The Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women (PEIACSW) is a nine-member, government-appointed arms-length government agency with a mandate to advise government and educate the public on matters that relate to the status of Prince Edward Island women.

The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women acknowledges all women-identifying people in our understanding of "women," including cis women, trans women, and gender minorities.

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 Coalition for Women's Leadership (the Coalition) is a nonpartisan nonprofit mandated to advance women's leadership in the political, civic, and democratic life on Prince Edward Island. The organization furthers this mandate by identifying and working to eliminate systemic and structural barriers to civic participation by women and gender-minorities, acting as a resource for those underrepresented groups seeking to run for elected office, while providing practical training and tools to increase their leadership skills.

The Coalition acknowledges all women-identifying people in our understanding of "women," including cis women and trans women.

The PEI Coalition for Women’s Leadership has been working with the PEI Federation of Municipalities on a project called “Fostering Resilience in Women Municipal Leaders”. This project first ran from 2022 to 2023, with a second iteration running currently from 2024 to 2026. The Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status of Women collaborated with the PEI Coalition for Women’s Leadership to ground this submission in the lived experience of women and gender-diverse municipal leaders.

On March 6, 2025, in collaboration with the PEI Coalition for Women’s Leadership, the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women brought together a focus group at the Crapaud Community Hall to consider questions of gender and municipal leadership. The focus of the semi-structured facilitation was on how gender in leadership affects municipalities’ actions to address gender-based violence in their communities. Advisory Council Research Coordinator Trish Altass facilitated the focus group, and Executive Director Jane Ledwell took notes. PEI Coalition for Women’s Leadership Executive Director Sarah Outram coordinated outreach for the focus group, and participated in the discussion. Focus group participants included four women with experience as municipal council members, mayors, or CAOs, and two representatives from Family Violence Prevention Services.

“When I came into council, it was an old boys’ club, and I really had to prove myself and my worth before I was accepted.”

The focus group was meant to inform two processes: first, to provide a wider scope on issues to inform the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women’s work with the rural municipality of Crapaud to develop a community action plan to end gender-based violence; and, second, to inform provincial consultations on the Municipal Government Act with insights on gender and governance and ways the Municipal Government Act could help prevent or end gender-based violence.

Based on the feedback received from the focus group, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

#### 1. Clarify and Simplify the Municipal Government Act

- Plain-language revisions of the MGA to reduce complexity and make it more accessible to municipal officials and community members.
- Reduce room for interpretation by clarifying contradictory sections and ensuring consistent application across all municipalities.
- Provide clear, consistent guidance from Municipal Affairs on how to implement the Act and deal with compliance issues.

#### 2. Strengthen Enforcement and Accountability

- Develop transparent enforcement mechanisms so that rule-breaking has clear consequences and those who follow the rules feel supported.

- Ensure accountability systems are equitable and not influenced by political or social pressures.
- Provide plain language public-facing summaries of responsibilities and processes to build trust and understanding.

“I think being a woman in government, I mean, we have strengths that a lot of people haven't even recognized, and not leaving under a lot of pressure is another thing. Because, you know, I mean, it's, it's not for the faint of heart.”

### 3. Expand Support for CAOs and Staff

- Establish mental health and wellness supports specific to the municipal sector (for example, a sector-specific helpline like agriculture has).
- Strengthen support for the PEI Federation of Municipalities to allow the Federation to relaunch a benefits program, including Employee Assistance Plans (EAP).
- Provide Human Resources (HR) support from the Province to aid with staff recruitment, retention, conflict resolution, and equitable and inclusive HR policy creation.

“I think women in politics are seen differently than men, because people are wondering, okay, well, do they have to get home to get their kids fed, get their kids to bed? Women never want to be sick. They don't want to call in and say, I'm not feeling well, because a man, it wouldn't be perceived the same way, whereas a woman, you know, [the perception is that] she's down and out again.”

### 4. Improve Training and Capacity-Building

- Increase investment in accessible, practical training for CAOs and elected officials, including training on addressing mis/disinformation, ideally before and during their roles.
- Develop gender-informed leadership training to help women navigate challenges and build resilience in high-stress, male-dominated environments.
- Training opportunities can be delivered in partnership with non-government organizations.

“I feel that there's different treatment. It's tough because a man could say a sentence, and a woman could say the exact same sentence, but he's seen as confident. We're seen as a b\*tch.” Women bring strengths to leadership that are not always recognized as strengths.”

### 5. Enhance Shared Services and Collaboration

- Create a roster of vetted provincial service providers to support planning, finance, and HR, while allowing choice to preserve local trust-building.
- Support regional collaboration with flexible, short- and medium-term shared services contracts to reduce stress and maintain service continuity.

## 6. Reform Consultation Processes

- Design inclusive consultation formats that allow participants to share real concerns rather than simply respond to pre-set questions.
- Ensure Municipal Affairs's role is clear in the consultation and follow-up, and that participants know where to turn for support or clarification.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission. Please let us know if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,



Jane Ledwell, Executive Director of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women



Sarah Outram, Executive Director of the Coalition for Women's Leadership

cc: Hon. Jenn Redmond, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women  
Michelle Harris-Genge, Director of the PEI Interministerial Women's Secretariat  
Members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women