

2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT



VOICES OF NEW BRUNSWICK WOMEN

CONSENSUS-BUILDING FORUM

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MESSAGE FROM CO-CHAIRS

On behalf of our colleagues and the staff of the Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum, we are pleased to present the annual report on the Forum's first full year of activities.

For the Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum, 2014-2015 saw the implementation of operating structures and mechanisms and the development of a certain number of policies and procedures. Setting up a new entity is always a challenge, and the Forum was no exception. That said, we can be proud of the work that has been accomplished.

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum has five characteristics that make it unique: diversity, representation, non-partisanship, power of influence, and access to resources. The diversity of expertise and experience around the Forum table is proof that women in New Brunswick are well represented. The composition of the Forum bodes well for the future.

In addition to our collective efforts, we wish to note that, when the New Brunswick government made the important decision to repeal the regulation that for decades had limited access to abortion in the province, it was a historic moment for New Brunswick women.

However, much remains to be done to achieve true equality in the province because many prejudices and forms of discrimination still exist. Being aware of this situation, and determined to correct all of these inequalities, we invite all New Brunswickers, women and men, to embrace the objectives of the Voice of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum in order to achieve true equality.

We would like to express our thanks to all of the individuals and groups across the province that are working to promote equal rights for women.

We hope you enjoy reading this report, and we look forward to seeing a great many of you at our activities.

Phylomène Zangio, Francophone Co-Chair
Kim Nash-McKinley, Anglophone Co-Chair

Co-chairs, Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum



5. MANDATE

The Forum was established in May 2013 by the New Brunswick government. The members were recruited in the fall of 2013 and then appointed in February 2014 by the Minister responsible for Women's Equality, Marie-Claude Blais. The Forum's first meeting was held on March 29, 2014. Before we turn our attention to the Forum's mandate, a few points are worth noting. It should be recalled that the Forum was established in response to the recommendations of the Voices of New Brunswick Women Working Group. That working group was set up in 2011 to analyze the ideas proposed during the Voices of Women Summit held in 2011. Its mandate was to suggest one or more structures for ensuring that women's voices are heard by government.

The Forum's mandate, as described in the Relationship Protocol with the provincial government, is to promote the equality of women and girls and improve their lives, advise the government on issues of interest to women, and raise public awareness of certain issues.

2. OPERATIONS

The Forum's office, which opened in the fall of 2014, is located at 551 King Street, Suite 103, in the Sartain MacDonald Building in Fredericton

Last September, the Forum adopted a framework setting out its vision elements and the values and principles that will guide its actions.

VISION ELEMENTS

- Equality
- Valorisation
- Access
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Education

SHARED VALUES

- Respect
- Equality
- Inclusion
- Commitment
- Collaboration
- Autonomy
- Accessibility
- Professionalism

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Openness to and representation of women's diversity
- Women's voices
- Independent research
- Collaboration and support of advocacy of women's groups
- Transparent and non-partisan communication



The guiding principles, based on the shared values, support the Forum's priorities: Listening to New Brunswick women and girls and serving as a consensus-building mechanism. In addition,

- The Forum is apolitical and enjoys total freedom of thought and action;
- The members of the Forum intend to work in close cooperation;
- The members of the Forum have agreed on rules of ethics, which are consistent with the values and principles identified.

3. FORUM MEMBERS

The Forum is made up of representatives of women's groups and individual members who are committed to improving the status of women in New Brunswick. They were appointed by the Minister responsible for Women's Equality after having indicated their interest.

At its first meeting, on March 29, 2014, the Forum elected two co-chairs, Phylomène Zangio and Kim Nash-McKinley, both for one-year terms.

As of March 31, 2015, the members of the Forum are as follows:

- Noëlla Richard
- Kim Nash-McKinley
- Phylomène Zangio
- Paulette Sonier Rioux
- Stéphanie Beaulieu
- Rina Arsenault, Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research
- Jewell Mitchell, YWCA of Moncton
- Joanne Britton, Women's Empowerment Network of Saint John
- Sue Pitman, Sussex Committee for the Prevention of Family Violence
- Jennifer Richard, Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre
- Wendy Robbins, Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program
- Jody Dallaire, New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
- Sylvie Morin, Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick
- Line Doiron, New Brunswick Association of CBDCs / Women in Business Initiative
- Norma Dubé, Assistant Deputy Minister, Women's Equality Branch (ex-officio member)

Past members:

- Christina Fowler, Urban Core Support Network
- Amy Martey, Sussex Committee for the Prevention of Family Violence
- Louise Aucoin, New Brunswick Coalition for Pay Equity
- Kyla LaPointe

Forum staff member:

- Valerie Kervin, administrative assistant



4. KEY ISSUES OF THE FORUM

Four key issues were identified as priorities by the members during a planning session that took place on September 13 and 14, 2014.

The four key issues are as follows:

I. Participation and Representation

The goal is to increase the representation and participation of women in positions of power and in decision making to 50%.

II. Wellness and Access

The goal is to improve the quality of life and the living conditions of women and to reduce discrimination. We will need to improve access to a variety of services that meet the needs of all women.

III. Economy and Self-sufficiency

The goal is more fairness, independence, and self-sufficiency for women, and reduction of poverty.

IV. Violence

The goal is to increase awareness about the reality of all forms of violence against women.



5. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

In 2014-2015, the members of the Forum held five (5) meetings and four (4) teleconferences. The highlights of the Forum's first year are as follows:

March 29, 2014 (meeting): The inaugural meeting of the Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum was held in Moncton. The Forum appointed two co-chairs: Phylomène Zangio and Kim Nash-McKinley.

May 3, 2014 (meeting): The Forum met in Fredericton, agreed to some changes in the Relationship Protocol, and noted the need to clarify its mandate.

The Forum passed a motion asking that the New Brunswick government repeal General Regulation 84-20, which requires women in the province to meet three conditions in order to obtain an abortion: the abortion must be performed in a hospital, by a gynecologist, and after two physicians have confirmed in writing that it was medically necessary. The Forum requested a meeting with the Minister to discuss this issue.

The Forum agreed on that an executive director needed to be hired.

June 16, 2014 (news release): The Voices of New Brunswick women issued a news release calling on government to repeal the regulation limiting access to abortion in the province. (Appendix A)

July 17, 2014 (teleconference): The meeting dealt mainly with criticism expressed against the Forum in the media and the issue of access to abortion following the closure of the Morgentaler Clinic.

July 24, 2014 (teleconference): The Forum met to discuss the organization of a strategic planning session. It was agreed that a consultant would be hired to coordinate the exercise and the development of a strategic plan.

The Forum requested a meeting with the Minister responsible for Women's Equality.

July 29, 2014 (special meeting): The co-chairs and a few members of the Forum met with the Minister responsible for Women's Equality to discuss their concerns about the autonomy of the Forum. The Forum members also discussed the importance of repealing General Regulation 84-20, limiting access to abortion, as soon as possible.



July 30, 2014 (meeting): The co-chairs met with the Minister responsible for Women's Equality to provide her with a document setting out the Forum's position on access to abortion.

September 2, 2014 (news release): The Forum joined with Aboriginal and public leaders and Human Rights Watch in calling for a public inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada. (Appendix B)

September 13 and 14, 2014 (meeting): The Forum met in Fredericton for a strategic planning session. With the help of a consultant, the Forum identified its vision, values, and guiding principles. It also prioritized four key issues: participation and representation, wellness and access, economy and self-sufficiency, and violence.

It was resolved that hiring an executive director was the Forum's top priority.

September 18, 2014 (news release): The Voices of New Brunswick Women Forum issued a news release outlining the results of its analysis of the election platforms and expressing its disappointment in the lack of attention women's equality issues received during the election campaign. (Appendix C)

November 22 and 23, 2014 (meeting)

The Forum met in Moncton.

The governance committee presented a motion aimed at changing the Forum's internal operations.

The members discussed the changes in abortion access promised by the new government, various potential scenarios for change, and the preparation of a news release following the announcement.

The Forum reiterated the importance of hiring an executive director. A consultant was hired to help with the process.

The Forum discussed the possibility of holding a joint activity with the Women's Equality Branch.

November 26, 2014 (news release): The Forum issued a news release applauding the provincial government's decision to repeal General Regulation 84-20 imposing conditions that have the effect of limiting access to abortion. (Appendix D)



December 10, 2014: The Forum analyzed the Speech from the Throne.

February 28, 2015 (teleconference): The Forum was in the final stages of hiring an executive director. A committee was struck to help the consultant with the strategic plan. A finance committee was established.

March 29, 2015 (teleconference): The Forum met to finalize the agenda for the next meeting. We also decided to prepare a news release welcoming our new executive director and commenting on the provincial budget, to be announced on March 31, 2015.

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES

September 23, 2014 (meeting): The co-chairs participated in the annual meeting of the Coalition of Provincial and Territorial Advisory Councils on the Status of Women, in Prince Edward Island.

Lack of access to abortion, economic security, and women in management positions were some of the issues discussed.

At that event, the Forum received solid support from the Prince Edward Island Advisory Council on the Status concerning its demand for access to abortion. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick are the only provinces in Canada that limit access to abortion.

October 17 and 18, 2014 (meeting): The Francophone co-chair participated in the Convention de l'Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick, held in Fredericton.

The issues discussed included education and continuing learning, cultural identity, and economic and social growth.

February 27, 2015 (meeting): The Anglophone co-chair participated in the National Roundtable on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls, in Ottawa. Elected federal and provincial officials, Aboriginal representatives, and friends and family of the missing women took part in the discussions.



6. COMMITTEES

The Forum has established some committees in order to get its operations under way. It was necessary to do this given the lack of staff and the Forum's budget challenges. Most of the committees were set up at the first working meeting and are made up entirely of Forum members. The co-chairs sit on these committees as ex-officio members.

1. COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE 2014-2015

Members: Paulette Sonier-Rioux, Line Doiron, and Stephanie Beaulieu

Issues:

- Overseeing the development of the website
- Preparation of a brochure for the public
- Support to the co-chairs in preparing the annual report
- Development of an internal and external communications policy.

2. GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2014-2015

Members: Rina Arsenault, Jewell Mitchell, and Jennifer Richard

Issues:

- Development of a consensus decision making protocol
- Development of internal operating rules in consultation with the members
- Development of a procedure for the selection of co-chairs and members
- Responsible for the ongoing review of the governance rules

3. FINANCE COMMITTEE

Members: Jewell Mitchell and Jody Dallaire

Issues:

- Responsible for the analysis of financial reports
- Monitoring of budget estimates

4. AD HOC RELATIONSHIP PROTOCOL COMMITTEE

Members: Sylvie Morin and Paulette Sonier-Rioux

Issue:

- Ongoing review of the Relationship Protocol and policies



5. SPECIAL COMMITTEE STUDYING ACCESS TO ABORTION

Members: Sylvie Morin, Noëlla Richard, and Wendy Robbins

Issues:

- Development of a position statement on access to abortion in New Brunswick
- Preparation of news releases on abortion

6. AD HOC STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members: Sylvie Morin, Noëlla Richard, and Wendy Robbins

Issue:

- Organization of a strategic planning session with a consultant



APPENDICES



Appendix A



Voices of New Brunswick Women
Consensus - Building Forum
Forum de concertation Les voix des
femmes du Nouveau-Brunswick

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Press release

For immediate release

The new government advisory agency on women's issues in New Brunswick, the Voices of Women Forum, is calling on the provincial government to immediately repeal the regulation that places barriers to access to abortion.

The *Medical Services Payment Act* regulation requires that the province only fund abortions that are performed by a gynaecologist, in a hospital, after two doctors have certified that it is medically required.

Abortion services have been widely available in most of Canada since the Supreme Court ruled in 1988 that the Criminal Code section on abortion violated women's right to security of the person. Only New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island do not abide by the court's ruling and continue to impose restrictions to abortion services, 26 years later.

"It is offensive to women of this province that we do not have the same equality rights as other women in Canada. We fought this battle in the 1980s and we won. We should not be forced to fight the same battles all over again", according to Kim Nash-McKinley, co-chair of the Forum.

The impending closure of the Morgentaler Clinic in Fredericton will further limit the already restricted access to abortion services in New Brunswick. The clinic handled more than half of all abortions done in the province.

"We are concerned that with fewer options, some women might harm themselves by choosing dangerous means to end a pregnancy. For this reason, it is urgent that the province change its policy and take the necessary measures to ensure that abortion services are made available to women everywhere in the province," added Phylomène Zangio, co-chair of the Forum.

For more information:

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Phylomène Zangio

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Appendix B



Voices of New Brunswick Women
Consensus - Building Forum
Forum de concertation Les voix des
femmes du Nouveau-Brunswick

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, September 2, 2014

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum joins with Aboriginal and public leaders and Human Rights Watch in calling for a public inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada.

According to an RCMP report published in May:

- There have been 1,186 cases of murdered or missing Aboriginal women and girls in Canada in the past 30 years;
- Aboriginal women accounted for 4.3% of the country's population, but 16% of women murdered and 11.3% of women missing.
- In Saskatchewan, Aboriginal women make up 55% of homicide victims, the highest rate in the country. A total of 153 Aboriginal women were murdered in that province between 1980 and 2012.

These numbers are very troubling. The issues surrounding the safety and security of Aboriginal women and girls are complex and a comprehensive public inquiry is needed to fully understand and resolve those issues. That is why we ask the federal government to act now.

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum is a 15-member body appointed by the Province of New Brunswick to advise the government on women's equality issues and to inform the public.

For further information:

contact Phylomène Zangio or Kim Nash-McKinley, co-chairs (Telephone 506-462-5179).

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Appendix C



Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus - Building Forum
Forum de concertation Les voix des femmes du Nouveau-Brunswick

September 18, 2014
Press release
For immediate release

Women's vote taken for granted

If, as is often said, election campaigns are a reflection of the importance we assign to women's issues in New Brunswick, among other things, then women may not have much to celebrate. The Voices of NB Women Consensus-Building Forum is disappointed with how women's equality issues have received almost no attention since the beginning of the election campaign.

The Forum has looked at the electoral platforms of the five parties and tried to assess what the parties plan to do on certain women's issues. We identified four themes: Participation in public life; Women's socio-economic equality; Health; Independent advisory body on women's issues.

Participation in public life

We first considered the number of female candidates running for office. We have known for a long time that women's participation in public life is a prerequisite if women's equality issues are going to get the attention they deserve. And to be effective, the participation rate needs to be set at 40% at least, or what is commonly referred to as the critical mass.

We note that 71 women are candidates in the 2014 election, the exact same number as in the 2010 election. Percentage wise, women represent 32% of all candidates this time (Green Party=48%; NDP=31%; PCP=29%; Liberal Party=27%), compared to 30% in 2010. In 2010, these numbers resulted in women making up less than 15% of elected representatives, and there is no reason to believe that women will do better this time.

What are political parties suggesting to address this problem? Only the NDP and the Liberal Party mention the issue of participation explicitly. The NDP proposes to modernize the Legislative Assembly to ensure that the work of the Assembly is conducted during normal working hours, making it easier for members with families. For its part, the Liberal Party promises to increase the number of women on the government's boards and commissions, which often leads women to participate in municipal, provincial or federal politics. It is worth noting that although the Green Party did not mention this issue in its platform, it is the party with the most number of female candidates with 22 women compared to 24 men.



Women's socio-economic equality

We also examined the commitments made by the parties on pay equity, minimum wage, daycare services and gender-based analysis.

Four of the five political parties have made commitments on pay equity. The NDP promises to legislate pay equity in the private sector for all employers with 10 or more employees, and to continue its application in the public sector. The Green Party would also legislate pay equity in the private sector; but no details are given. The Liberal Party would continue to apply pay equity in the public sector; change the methodology used to compare male-dominated jobs with female-dominated jobs; and force pay equity on companies with 50 or more employees who do business with the government. The Progressive Conservative Party (PCP) would continue to apply pay equity in the public sector and to encourage the private sector to do likewise.

There are in New Brunswick only enough regulated daycare spaces for 23% of children, and many low-income families cannot afford to pay for those spaces. The Liberal Party has committed to creating 30,000 new spaces between now and 2020, to create a provincial registry of daycare spaces, and to eliminate the obstacles for low-income families. The NDP also promises assistance to low-income families and would introduce an easy-to-understand formula to navigate the existing child-care programs. The Green Party promises an increase in the number of child care centres in primary schools. The PCP does not mention daycare in its platform but it says it will continue to implement its plan "Putting Children First", which apparently deals with childcare, salaries of childcare employees and assistance for low-income families.

Women's groups have been advocating gender-based analysis (GBA) for a number of years. This analysis is applied during the development of legislation, policies and services in order to assess the impact these will have on women. The process allows to make changes proceeding to the adoption stage. Only the Liberal Party mentioned GBA and promised to apply it in all policy development. The NDP promises a similar analysis which consider First Nations, linguistic minorities as well as women. Although the PCP makes no mention of GBA in its platform, it did introduce the program in its last Throne Speech and implementation has begun.

Health and Well-Being

The closure of the Morgentaler Clinic this past July brought the lack of access to abortion services in New Brunswick to the forefront of public debate. NB, along with PEI, is the only province where access to abortion is limited. Women have demanded that Regulation 84-20, which forces women to obtain the permission of two doctors, requires that the procedure be conducted by a specialist (gynecologist or obstetrician) and that it be conducted in a hospital. Women also want more points of access. Three of the five parties have promised to abolish Regulation 84-20. The NDP also promises a women's health centre in the province. The PCP and the People's Alliance of NB make no mention of abortion in their platforms, but the leader of the PCP has said that he is in favour of the status quo.



On the issue of midwives, three parties mentioned the issue. The NDP would implement the existing legislation, the Green Party would give access to midwives in community health centres, while the Liberal Party mentions midwives in the context of its promise to improve health services. The PCP does not mention midwives but the issue could be discussed in one of the numerous reports/plans it has listed in its platform.

Independent advisory body on women's issues

Only the Liberal Party has committed to fund an independent advisory body on women's issues, which we view as a positive commitment. All other parties are mute on this issue.

To conclude, we know that the citizens of this province will consider several issues before deciding how to vote. We encourage women to make an informed decision by paying attention to what the candidates are saying. We encourage women to vote for those who will best defend their equality rights.

For more information:

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Appendix D



Voices of New Brunswick Women
Consensus - Building Forum
Forum de concertation Les voix des
femmes du Nouveau-Brunswick

For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum

applauds the provincial government's decision.

Fredericton, November 26, 2014 – The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum is thrilled with the New Brunswick government's decision to make abortion services truly accessible in the province. The government has in fact announced the abolition of the required conditions for access to abortion services defrayed by the province's healthcare insurance plan.

"We are happy and relieved that the Gallant government recognizes New Brunswick women's right to have access to abortion. It was long overdue for the reproductive health issue to be taken seriously in its entirety," explains Kim Nash-McKinley, the Forum's co-chair. The conditions, which insisted that two doctors having confirmed via writing that the abortion was medically necessary and that the abortion be done by a gynecology or obstetrics specialist will no longer exist.

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum is rejoicing still, at the prospect of seeing the government announce that service locations will be opened in all regions of New Brunswick which, in the eyes of the organization, demonstrates a real motivation to make these services accessible to all women. The fact that the government has acted quickly on this file also shows that it intends to keep its promises of achieving a true equality of the sexes in the province.

"This decision puts an end to a situation which was jeopardizing the health and safety of women and girls in New Brunswick. When abortion is not accessible, means which are parallel to the healthcare system are put in place so as to end unwanted pregnancies," explains Madam Phylomène Zangio. "Today, all the people who worked themselves ragged for years and years trying to promote the recognition of this right for the women of the province can now consider their mission accomplished."

The Voices of New Brunswick Women Consensus-Building Forum is an independent organization whose mandate is to promote women's equality and that of girls also, while improving their lives. The Forum also has the role of counselling the government on issues of interest for women.

For more information:

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