

Pre-budget consultation 2021-2022

Submitted to the Government of New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Women's Council recommends that government publish an account of how it used gender-based analysis (or other similar tools and processes) in the 2021-2022 budget process.

What is gender-based analysis?

Gender-based analysis (GBA) is a tool used to assess how specific populations may experience policies, programs, and initiatives differently than others. GBA goes beyond sex and gender to consider intersecting factors that shape individuals' experiences, including age, location, race, culture, ability, and language. It is an essential part of effective and evidence-based public policy.

In 2016, government announced that GBA was required in decision-making and policy development – but that requirement did not extend to the budget. In the 2020-2021 budget process, however, departments were required to include gender impact assessments in their submissions.

"... the decisions we make and the policies that are put in place impact men and women differently. A budget that supports vibrant and sustainable communities is one that understands the impacts it is having on all New Brunswickers.

I am proud that for the first time ever, as part of their submissions, departments were required to include a gender impact assessment."

Hon. Ernie Steeves, minister of Finance and Treasury Board, [budget speech 2020-2021](#)

www.nbwomenscouncil.ca

1.844.462.5179



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What information would be published?

The Women's Council recommends that government provide the public with an account of how GBA (or other similar tools and processes) was used in the development of the budget, what it revealed, and how government responded. Specifically:

- Which demographics and specific populations were identified as having unique or different needs that required consideration in the budget process? How were these needs addressed?
- Which budget measures were identified as having the potential to impact specific demographics or populations differently than others? How were these impacts either leveraged (in the case of positive differential impacts) or mitigated (in the case of negative differential impacts) to ensure a fair and effective budget?
- In areas where government is maintaining the status quo, what differential impacts (positive and negative) were identified and how were they addressed?

Why should this information be published?

The Women's Council has [consistently advised](#) that as a matter of transparency and accountability [government should publicly share](#) more information on its use of GBA as well as information generated by GBA processes.¹

These recommendations are about ensuring that GBA is not only being done but done well and affecting decision-making. They arise from a long and ongoing history of women — especially those who are Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQIA2S+ and/or disabled — being overlooked, marginalized, or treated as tokens in decision-making.

While the Women's Council believes that transparency in government's use of GBA is critical, the rationale for the recommendation to release the findings of GBAs goes beyond accountability. When done well, GBA processes should generate valuable information that, if made publicly available, will enrich debate on issues and strengthen our democracy. This information is also useful to the work of entities like the Women's Council, community-based organizations, and businesses striving to advance women's equality in our province.

What about specific spending recommendations for 2021-2022?

In addition to this advice, the Women's Council is also re-sharing our [existing advice on a variety of issues](#) (many of which have budgetary implications), [on COVID-19](#), and our primers on [co-creation and social deficits and debt](#).

¹ GBAs themselves are typically part of cabinet documents and are therefore confidential; this is why we have asked for *information generated by these processes* rather than the analyses themselves to be released. The same distinction applies to this budget recommendation.

Why now?

Government is well poised to provide information on its GBA work on the budget this year for two reasons:

- consideration of differential impacts, in the spirit of GBA, was built into the budget process last year; and
- the budget is going to be significantly shaped by COVID-19 – and government has committed to doing GBA on all COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Government is already doing the work – we’re simply asking for them to share more of it publicly. This aligns with government’s commitment to accountability and transparency under its Affordable, Responsive and High-Performing Government priority.

Lastly, with authoritarian and populist movements emerging around the world and the ongoing stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that governments take steps to increase their credibility and build trust with the public. Being more open about their decision-making and showing how they are ensuring policy is evidence-based are ways that they can do this.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated the situation for vulnerable groups across New Brunswick. Response and recovery efforts that take into account the vulnerable groups will help prevent further economic and social inequalities and create more responsive, vibrant and sustainable communities... The Province is committed to ensure gender-based analysis is applied in all COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.”

[Fall Pandemic Response and Preparedness Plan 2020](#)

COVID-19 digital library

The New Brunswick Women’s Council has created a library of online content on the COVID-19 pandemic that considers marginalized populations, the not-for profit sector, or uses a social justice lens. Visit the library at bibliothequecovidlbrary.ca