



AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES

Status of Women should be amplifying women's voices & working together

In response to the recommendations of the 1970 Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) and lobbying by the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), Federal, Provincial, and Territorial governments created space within their structures for women's collective voices to be heard. These spaces now need to be strengthened, expanded, and linked with feminist organizations to make greater progress on women's equality.

Links Between Governments and Women's Organizations, 1971-2000s

From 1971 to 2010 the NAC, a coalition that grew from 30 to hundreds of women's organizations, lobbied for implementation of the RCSW's recommendations. These recommendations prompted the creation of advisory councils, women's centres, and regional offices of the status of women. At the urging of the NAC, the federal Status of Women held its first Federal-Provincial/Territorial (FPT) meeting in the early 1980s. Over this period, the NAC also advocated for research and action on women's issues and social justice, and women participated in government consultations and influenced decision-making.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments provided the resources needed to coordinate activities ranging from policy advice to programming. They made space within their structures for women's collective voices to be heard and were responsive to

the pressure applied by the NAC and its members. Governments also supported women's programming and piloted new endeavours. Effective consultation occurred as Canada took control of its constitution from Great Britain and established the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Women's organizations provided advocacy, collective agency, community engagement, outreach, and research. They undertook the analysis needed to change existing institutional structures and policy frameworks. Consultation, collaboration, and coordination strengthened the relationship between women's organizations' and governments. This strategy was what feminists wanted.

Together, women's organizations that amplified women's voices and receptive governments accomplished more than either alone could do.

Why is the Status of Women FPT Group important for Women?

FPT Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women have held discussions annually for the past 35 years to share information, showcase best practices, and explore issues on a basis of mutual respect and reciprocity. But women's organizations and the women's movement no longer have an institutional relationship with the Ministers. The Status of Women FPT Group now conducts its activities without the research, policy advice, and best practices formerly supplied by women's organizations and the NAC.

The 2017 annual meeting of the FPT Ministers responsible for the Status of Women occurred with

Indigenous leaders to address important issues for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women. The Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Native Women's Association of Canada, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, and Women of the Métis Nation attended.

The next meeting will be held in the Yukon in Fall 2018. Hopefully Indigenous organizations will continue to be included to expand the circle of information sharing, successes, and agenda-setting.



Policy4Women

Public space, public engagement



Priorities of the Status of Women FPT Group

Current priorities for the FPT Ministers responsible for the Status of Women are:

- ending gender-based violence,
- achieving economic security, and
- growing women's leadership and participation throughout society.

In 2017 Status of Women Canada announced a \$100 million dollar federal fund to prevent and address gender-based violence over the next five years. This federal priority is explained in *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*.

In November 2017, the FPT Group discussed the low reporting rate of sexual assault across Canada,

examples of collaboration among law enforcement services, community groups supporting survivors of sexual assault, and possibilities for an expansion of third-party reporting of sexual assault. The Group reviewed the research they sponsored on closing the gender wage gap and applying Gender-Based Analysis Plus to better understand how diverse people, including women, experience interactions with government programs and services. They also agreed to research models of parental leave that address women's economic security.

In January 2018 the federal government announced an additional \$20 million for projects responding to Indigenous, immigrant, and LGBTQ survivors of gender-based violence.

What Governments Can Do Now

It's time for federal, provincial, and territorial governments to develop an agenda for women's equality. Governments must:

- develop gender equality plans with concrete outcomes, timelines, deliverables, and measures so the public can see how much better off women are as a result of renewed and coordinated efforts to reduce gender-based violence, improve women's economic security, and strengthen women's leadership.
- provide more resources to Status of Women programs and strengthen their mandate within government (Alberta and Ontario have led the way by creating Status of Women Ministries).
- support gender advisory committees that are fully representative of women's organizations.
- fund women's organizations to do their important work.

The Status of Women FPT Group has a role and responsibility to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 2020. This includes taking stock of what has (and has not) been done since then. For example, the recommendation to create a national childcare program has never been implemented.

Status of Women groups at all levels of governments should amplify women's voices. They should work

Status of Women Canada. (2017, Jun 19). *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* [news release]. Available from https://www.canada.ca/en/status-women/news/2017/06/it_s_time_canadasstrategytopreventandaddressgender-basedviolence.html

Status of Women Canada. (2017, Nov 10). *Status of Women Ministers Advance Key Priorities Affecting Women and Girls* [news release]. Available from https://www.canada.ca/en/status-women/news/2017/11/status_of_women_ministersadvancekeyprioritiesaffectingwomenandgi.html

Status of Women Canada. (2018, Jan 17). *Minister Monsef announces funding reform and \$20 million to address gender-based violence* [news release]. Available from https://www.canada.ca/en/status-women/news/2018/01/minister_monsef_announcesfundingreformand20milliontopreventandad.html

collaboratively with feminist organizations. They should renew the relationship between women's organizations and the Status of Women FPT Group to make gender equality a reality.

Women want their rights. Our voices are being heard. We want gender equality now.

Intersectionality: The Changing Nature of European Equality Regimes (2012) by Andrea Krizsan, Hege Skjeie & Judith Squires

Policy Making (2013) by Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier & Mieke Verloo

Status of Women Canada (www.swc-cfc.gc.ca)

Resources

Policy4Women.com



Centre for Feminist
Research at York
University



FAFIA-AFAI



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

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