

Statement on Threatened Closure of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre (AWRC) opened in December of 1983. Since that time, it has provided crucial services and programs to women and families of this community. Recent decisions by the provincial government have raised the prospect of the imminent closure of the centre. The budget tabled by the provincial government this month outlined a cut to women's centres, transition houses and men's programs in the amount of \$890,000. It is clear that the provincial government is attempting to table a balanced budget on the backs of women and children.

This budget decision is serious enough but it also takes place at the same time that the government is demanding the restructuring of services for women and children. In a document released this week by the Department of Community Services a framework of proposed changes are outlined which will result in the closure of a number of transition houses and women's centres around the province. The framework produced by the Department of Community Services focuses entirely on family violence issues to the exclusion of other significant issues faced by women and their families, many of which are addressed in a unique and effective way by women's centres.

The Antigonish Women's Resource Centre is vital to this community. The centre provides services and programs to a diverse range of women in the Antigonish area and in Guysborough county. Women facing such issues as poverty, sexual violence, family breakdown, and discrimination in employment can access crisis intervention and peer support services through the AWRC. The Centre also fosters the development of new initiatives such as the Antigonish Affordable Housing Society, the On the Road to Employment program for women facing barriers to employment, after-school workshops for at-risk youth, life skills workshops for women, and therapy groups for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

The closure of the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre will mean the loss of an independent community-based organization that responds effectively to local needs and plays an essential role in community development. The community will lose an organization which, over almost 20 years, has developed extensive expertise, resources, and networks of essential importance to women, their families, and the local area. Antigonish and surrounding area will also lose services and programs which are developed by and for women, and can address women's needs in a highly relevant and effective way.

What people can do. You can express your opposition to the government's budget cuts and proposed closures by contacting the following individuals:

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It is important to make your voice heard before the budget is passed on April 18th, 2002.