

Brief Historical Overview re: Vision, Goals & Objectives How we got here

Women's groups recognized that policy changes in the 90's impacting women disproportionately with negative social and economic results. e.g. cuts to transfers, decreased opportunity for Education & Training, cuts to U.I. , Social Assistance Restructuring, and cuts to Community Agencies.

FemJEPP: Briefs and responses to government.

Response to Rebuilding the System" - October 1998

- expressing our Vision, providing recommendations and calling for "strategic partnerships" and an ongoing "meaningful consultative process" to ensure holistic, long term social policy development that strengthens individuals and improves community well-being."
- Vision - ***Social Policy Development Framework*** - forward thinking & developmental that crosses government departments and all sectors of our communities; essential to conceptualize new policies, expand existing services and develop new programs and services that **protect, nurture and sustain individuals, families and communities**. Must invest in our people and our social infrastructure now to ensure long term health and economic well-being of our citizens, our communities and our province. Shift in thinking required from seeing social programs as only consuming financial resources to the understanding that they are **critical investments in protecting and increasing human and social capital**.
- Proposed - a **direct line of communication** between the community and government which could advise the minister on the real needs of the community **determined by the direct experience** of consumers and active members of community-based organizations and agencies. See Figure 1.1
- NOTE: This Framework would emphasize improving the links between interrelated social and financial issues and formulating interrelated solutions and program initiatives. e.g. programs to support children's growth and development would be integrated across sectors (**education, health, social services, housing, recreation, environment**) and incorporate **family, school and community networks**.
- Consultation that is collaborative, and part of a logical, on-going process of dialogue would be central to this **Social Policy Development Framework**. Information-sharing, from the beginning, must be part of this dialogue process for its success requires systemic, on-going public and consumer collaboration that is not adversarial in nature but rather **team-oriented and consensus-building**. This means finding solutions that are mutually acceptable and based on integrative feminist principles such as **fairness, availability, access and equity**.

A Call to Good Government: Strategic Investment for a Better Future - Nov. 1999

- Challenged the myth of “deficit terrorism” and again suggested moving to a forward thinking investment **“Social Policy Development Framework”** for Nova Scotia
- We asserted that the broad determinants of Population Health, **income, education, social support networks, employment and working conditions** are key not only to reducing persistent health status disparities but also to enabling a coordinated attack on poverty in our province.
- We restated our commitment to work with all concerned citizens, community groups and organizations, labour, business and government to ensure a “sustainable” economy in Nova Scotia and “just and equitable” socioeconomic policy development for all Nova Scotians.
- Recommended going beyond GDP - essential to first measure the ***indicators of real prosperity and well-being*** so that we can have a practical, long-term vision based on the ***realities of daily living*** and develop a sound, sustainable economic plan that will improve our quality of life and maintain a high standard of living for our citizens. Referred to Genuine Progress Index (GPI).
- We cautioned the NS government not to continue on the devastating course of other “cost-cutting” governments to “balance the budget at **all costs**” - in particular, at the cost of the socioeconomic well-being of our citizens. **Starving public programs now will only result in larger costs down the road!**
- We asked our new provincial government to take a different tack, and set our path for **strategic investment** in individuals, families and communities to enable a vibrant, self-reliant province with a **sustainable economy**.
- We included sections on “Openness and Accountability” and the “Role of Government”
e.g. “Our government should remain a strong and positive force in our society and is essential as a democratic counter-balance to the unequal marketplace.”

Other Activities & ongoing work re-Collaboration:

- Meetings with Community Services Department
- Women In Public Policy Project - STEPS
- 6-month Initial Phase to work with Community Services on Administrative Review & developing a “collaborative relationship” to identify a policy issue and develop a collaborative process approved but stopped due to election of new government - best laid plans??!!
- Moved to developing “Spheres of Influence” and identifying “Policy Steps” in Nova Scotia (Bob Abbott, Priorities & Planning)
- WIT Forum - WIT Research & 10 Main Issues - “first voice” women

Development
Goal & Objective Shift: To become "pro-active" & seek ways to influence policy - couldn't count on government coming together across sectors with community in "collaborative process"! Moved to putting forth an "integrated policy" approach re- "umbrella policy framework" using an Impact Assessment Tool"

FemJEPP's consistent message:

- Social Policy Development Framework
- Cross-Sectoral and Inter-related social and economic factors
- Meaningful Consultation - logical, on-going process of dialogue between community organizations, labour, business, and government
- Investment in individuals, families and community
- "first voice" incorporated in Public Policy Development & Implementation

Takes us to present Project Activities:

To develop concrete "integrated policy" framework for developing policy that will impact positively on the social and economic well-being of women, their families and their communities. Our main goal being to enable the economic independence of all women in Nova Scotia.