



GOVERNMENT OF
NEWFOUNDLAND
AND LABRADOR

Taking Action Against Violence

2006 - 2012



Violence Prevention Initiative

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MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER



In the 2005 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to a new violence prevention program with new management and leadership.

This action plan demonstrates our commitment to take action and respond to the needs of our communities. *Taking Action Against Violence* will be the blueprint for building stronger resilient communities with strategies and resources to stop the growth of violence and over time reduce violence dramatically in our province.

By working in partnership with community organizations and making strategic investments in awareness, education, services, and changes to legislation, we can ensure that violence against the most vulnerable in our society is reduced.

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's strategy for violence prevention in the province is about taking action. In consultation with the community and in response to their concerns, government has developed a strong, new action plan which will address the root causes of violence through a focus on prevention and early intervention.

Over the next six years, government is committed to increasing awareness and attitudinal change, increasing community participation and improving legislation, policy, programs and services. These actions will support women and children leaving abusive situations, Aboriginal women and children, youth, seniors, persons with disabilities, and those marginalized due to race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or economic status. The program also includes research and improved leadership and accountability mechanisms to ensure that there are clear roles and responsibilities established to better collaborative with our partners as we work toward a common goal.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The Violence Prevention Initiative is a partnership between government and community organizations to address violence prevention.



The Honourable Joan Burke, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women with the Community Advisory Committee of the Violence Prevention Initiative, February 2006.

*Top (left to right): Judy Ward, Linda Soper, Darlene Rideout, Sherry Rowsell
Bottom (left to right): Laurie Smith, Joan Burke, Dana English.*

Program partners include:

Labradorians for Peaceful Communities,
Grenfell Regional Anti-Violence Team,
Western Regional Coalition to End Violence,
Committee Against Violence Inc.,
Eastern Region Committee Against Violence,
Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence – Eastern Avalon,
Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women,
Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre,
Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Citizen's Crime Prevention Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

Community stakeholders include:

Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre,
Coalition of Persons with Disabilities,
Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Association for New Canadians,
Boys and Girls Club of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Canadian Mental Health Association of Newfoundland and Labrador,
The Canadian Red Cross,
Community Youth Network,
The AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Human Rights Association of Newfoundland and Labrador,
John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador,
Independent Living Resource Centre,
Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living,
Newfoundland Gay and Lesbians for Equality
St. John's Native Friendship Centre,
Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland,
Aboriginal women in Newfoundland and Labrador representing Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

OVERVIEW

Violence destroys relationships, families, and has devastating long-term effects on its victims. However, violence is preventable. There is strong evidence that effective intervention can reduce and prevent violence. Preventative measures aimed at addressing societal inequality, providing opportunities for women and vulnerable populations before they are victimized and investments in early interventions with children, youth and those that influence them, have all proven successful.

A focus on prevention and early intervention will therefore permeate all strategies, goals, and actions of the new Violence Prevention Initiative.

To be effective we have to change attitudes, behaviors and social norms associated with violence. It is equally important to provide services to victims at the earliest possible stage in the cycle of violence to minimize the effects. Effective responses from the Justice system are also an important element of preventing violence.

The Violence Prevention Initiative is led by a Committee of Ministers and is chaired by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. There are nine partner departments and agencies consisting of the Women's Policy Office, the Departments of Justice, Health and Community Services, Education, Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, along with the Rural Secretariat, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and the Labour Relations Agency. A Deputy Ministers' Steering Committee and a Community Advisory Committee was established in 2005 to facilitate the directions set by the Government for this work.

The Community Advisory Committee is made up of representatives from community-based organizations. The Committee works with government and the Regional Coordinating Committees to ensure that the grass-roots information informs policies and programs created by government to address violence prevention. These Regional Coordinating Committees are made up of representatives from other community-based service providers. The Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre and the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador are also funded to provide direct service and programming for violence awareness and victim's services.

In the 2006 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador renewed its commitment to reducing violence in Newfoundland and Labrador in partnership with community and other stakeholders. This six-year comprehensive plan of action and an annual investment of \$1.25 million by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will increase government and community capacity to achieve, in the long-term, a reduction in violence against women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status.

The new strengthened Violence Prevention Initiative will expand community capacity, improve legislation, policy, programs and services related to violence prevention, embark on a broad-reaching public awareness campaign, and reaffirm government's commitment to taking action on violence through new accountability mechanisms.

Strong leadership, multi-disciplinary strategies and comprehensive resources are needed to stop the growth of violence and dramatically reduce violence in our province. Government recognizes that there are enormous needs and many issues to be addressed over the long-term. This new action plan will identify the key segments which government will tackle in the first six years of what will be an on-going endeavor.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

There has been much progress since the establishment of the Violence Prevention Initiative in March 2000. At that time, community partners were included in the Initiative with a formal role at the provincial level and six regional coordinating committees. These committees were provided with funding to build community capacity and work together with the Initiative on shared goals. A dedicated managerial position was established in the Women's Policy Office to coordinate the activities of the Violence Prevention Initiative. The following are examples of accomplishments since 2000:

- The provision of approximately \$300,000 annually to six regional committees and two provincial committees to collaborate with Government, coordinate services, and to offer conferences, workshops, and other special events to engage the community in violence prevention.
- The completion of a provincial attitudinal survey in 2002 which will be used as baseline to measure change in this new Violence Prevention Initiative.
- The development of the Violence Awareness and Action Training program. To date, in excess of 1000 people have participated in the regional train-the-trainer program.
- The implementation of a coordinated public awareness and information strategy which includes regionally-based public awareness and education through the regional coordinating committees; the instituting of violence prevention month; a dedicated violence prevention web-site; an on-going public awareness campaign focusing on target populations; and, the development of several information pamphlets on the topics of: surviving sexual assault, celebrating diversity, date rape drugs, dating violence, bullying, and stalking.
- Support for research aimed at improving policy and services to victims of violence including: Moving Toward Safety: Responding to Family Violence in Aboriginal and Northern Communities of Labrador; Strengthening the Voice of Children: Responding to the Needs of Children in the Justice System; an

Evaluation of the Victim Services Program; Department of Justice; and, Research into Sexual Assault Response Teams.

- The implementation of the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative of the Department of Education.
- The completion of the report Moving Forward: Responding to the Needs of Victims of Violence, Social Policy Development Through Collaboration and Partnerships with the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment.
- The expansion of victim services and inclusion of children in victim services; and, introduction of Family Violence Legislation, with the Department of Justice.
- Review of victims of violence policy with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.
- The launch of Building Community Knowledge project to enhance community access to consolidated violence and crime statistics in Newfoundland and Labrador, through the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, Rural Secretariat and the Women's Policy Office.
- The production of two inter-departmental policy documents: Interdepartmental Anti-Violence Policy Framework, and Collaborating with Community: Introduction, Rationale and a Guide for Government.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

DEFINITION OF VIOLENCE

Although there are many definitions of violence and abuse, there are certain common characteristics of violence and abusive behaviour. Violence and other forms of abuse are best understood as a pattern of behaviour intended to establish and maintain control/dominance over family, household members, intimate partners, colleagues or groups. Violence and abuse are a reflection of, and are directed towards continuation of an imbalance of power between victim and abuser. The roots of all forms of violence are founded in the many types of inequality which continue to exist and grow in our society. Family violence, for example, is now understood as a manifestation of the inequality between males and females. It must also be emphasized that violence can be an outcome of any power imbalance which is the product of ability, age, creed, ethnicity, economic status, gender, race and sexual orientation. For example, elderly men are often as vulnerable to abuse as older women.

*(Interdepartmental Anti-Violence Policy Framework,
Violence Prevention Initiative, 2001)*

CURRENT STATUS

Violence continues in homes and communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Its victims include women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status. According to the most recent Canadian statistics from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) there has not been any change in the percentage of Canadians (7%) 15 years of age and over in a current, previous, or common-law union who experienced spousal violence in the previous five years. (Statistics Canada, 2005). The same survey found that female victims of spousal violence were three times more likely than male victims to fear for their life (34% versus 10%) and three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the violence (29% versus 10%). Individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 who have been in a common-law relationship for three years or less, and whose partner is a frequent heavy drinker, are at an increased risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their intimate partner. These indicators support the need to focus on early intervention with children and young adults.

A 2002 public attitudes survey in Newfoundland and Labrador noted there was a high concern about children witnessing violence in the family (64%), while 69% were concerned with school-based violence. 56% of respondents indicated that violence against women and violence in dating relationships (53%) were the next biggest concerns.

During 2004, there were 1,084 admissions of women and dependent children to shelters in Newfoundland and Labrador. Of those admitted for abuse, 100% were fleeing psychological abuse, 67% physical abuse, 60% threats, 33% harassment, 20% financial abuse, and 13% sexual abuse (Statistics Canada). These statistics only represent a portion of actual cases of abuse. According to Statistics Canada only a small percentage of victims of violence and sexual assault contact shelters and related services. The 2004 GSS reported that about one-third (34%) of victims (47% female and 20% male) indicated that they had turned to a formal help agency because of violence. Also significant is the fact that only 27% of victims of spousal violence reported the incidence to the police, which is unchanged from the 1999 GSS.

SETTING THE CONTEXT

Gender Equity

Violence is rooted in inequality. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador fully understands this factor as one of the main causes of violence against women and other vulnerable populations. Therefore, one of the strategies government will employ will be to use a gender equity lens in the development of all policies and activities associated with the plan. The Government will also continue to support the work of community based women's equality-seeking councils and others who advance women's equality. In this Province, having a Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and a Women's Policy Office are also seen as fundamental mechanisms to ensure that women share equitably in the social and economic benefits of our province.

Social and Economic Development

A social development approach involving individuals, families, communities, and Government is necessary to truly address the root causes of violence. This approach requires early intervention initiatives to change attitudes, to reach out to children and youth, and to build strong networks and community capacity for sustainable activities.

There is a relationship between poor economic circumstances and limited opportunities for advancement and an increased vulnerability to violence. Government is committed to reducing poverty in our province to increase economic independence and decrease the circumstances that create loss of power and control for women, children, seniors and others. The new poverty reduction strategy supports government's goal to reduce violence in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Population is Aging

Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the fastest aging populations in Canada. Government has created a Division of Seniors and Aging in the Department of Health and Community Services to meet the increasing needs of seniors. Abuse is one of the issues which seniors face in its many forms: financial, physical, emotional, and neglect. In Canada, "(Elder) Abuse and neglect are thought to be seriously under-reported, so statistics are unreliable: surveys capture only what victims want to disclose, while police data reveal only the abuse that comes to their attention." (National Advisory Council on Aging, Government of Canada. *Expression*. Vol. 17, No. 1, Winter 2003-04). The prevalence of elder abuse was found to be experienced by four percent of the population in a 1990 widely used Ryerson survey (Podnieks et al.,) However, experts generally estimate that one in ten older persons in Canada experience some form of abuse. In this province, the Seniors Resource Centre Association of Newfoundland and Labrador reported in 2005 that four to six percent of calls to its toll-free information line concern elder abuse. (*Strategic Plan to Address Elder Abuse in Newfoundland and Labrador 2005*) It is therefore important that the new Violence Prevention Initiative increase its efforts towards reducing violence against seniors.

Aboriginal Women and Children

Nationally, the rate of spousal homicide among Aboriginal women is more than three times higher than for non-Aboriginal women. In September 2004, the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Status of Women Ministers established a priority action item to address issues of violence for Aboriginal women.

The federal government has constitutional and fiduciary responsibility for Aboriginal people. The federal government offers a wide range of programs and services specifically to Aboriginal people. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and federal government departments will work with Aboriginal governments and organizations and others to address the priorities associated with violence prevention to maximize the benefit of federal funding programs for Aboriginal people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Community Participation

Violence prevention is everyone's responsibility. Reduction of violence at the individual, family and community levels is only possible through the coordinated efforts of community organizations, all levels of government and other stakeholders. Women's organizations and other equality seeking organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador have been the leaders in anti-violence work in this province for decades. Over the past six years the Violence Prevention Initiative has worked with these groups to strengthen partnerships and provide resources to sustain their vital work at the community level. Government encourages community participation in violence prevention.

Federal and National Collaboration

The Federal government has several initiatives and working committees which supports the work of provinces and territories on violence prevention. Newfoundland and Labrador has been a partner in these national efforts for the past decade and will continue to strengthen its participation in these initiatives. In particular the new program will strengthen its involvement with the Department of Public Safety and Preparedness – National Crime Prevention Strategy and with the Provincial-Territorial Family Violence Initiative.

International Commitments and Directions

This plan meets the full requirements recommended for activities in the 2002, *World Report on Violence and Health*, of the World Health Organization for jurisdictions to advance violence prevention, namely:

1. Increasing the capacity for collecting data on violence
2. Researching violence – its causes, consequences and prevention
3. Promoting the primary prevention of violence
4. Promoting gender and social equality and equity to prevent violence
5. Strengthening care and support services for victims
6. Bringing it all together – developing a national plan of action

WHAT WE HEARD - PREPARING THE PLAN

The first round of consultations took place in February 2005, with a Provincial Forum held in St. John's and meetings with regional coordinating committees and other stakeholders. During these consultations, participants were asked to provide suggestions and recommendations on the new structure (Appendix A).

Government's initial response to the recommendations stemming from the forum was presented to key stakeholders in St. John's on September 19, 2005. During that meeting, Minister Joan Burke outlined new accountability measures, an expanded community program, and six key directions for a new program.

Following this meeting, additional consultations were held with each of the six regional coordinating committees of the VPI and all partner provincial organizations. A focus

group was held, along with individual meetings with approximately 15 additional provincial organizations. These consultations culminated with a meeting of the newly appointed Community Advisory Committee of the Violence Prevention Initiative on January 20, 2006.

The recommendations received on the six key direction areas are summarized below.

Public Awareness, Education and Training

The consultations revealed overwhelming support for a long term, provincial public awareness campaign led by the province. The community suggested a multi-tiered, multi-messaged public awareness campaign to increase awareness about issues relating to violence and violence prevention. The need for youth involvement was emphasised.

The community recommended that the key message for public awareness should be “violence is unacceptable”. It was also noted that awareness regarding the services available needed to be raised, along with equality issues as a root cause of violence.

The community suggested ways in which to engage the public and which populations they feel need to be targeted. Community groups noted that awareness campaigns should be integrated into other education and information tools and sessions in the community rather than having separate “anti-violence” sessions. They also felt that people should be given concrete information on available services for victims and specific directions on how to report violence.

Awareness of elder abuse was identified as a gap and it was suggested that a full public awareness strategy be developed and implemented in conjunction with senior’s organizations in the province.

The community identified that special measures should be taken to ensure that public awareness also reaches communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

The community was pleased with the current Violence Awareness and Action Training (VAAT) program and other violence prevention training offered by departments and agencies, but recommended more funding was required to broaden the reach of VAAT and to support other relevant training. This training, they felt, should be extended to 911 dispatchers, government employees, teachers and employees of the justice system.

Cultural sensitivity training is also a key priority for community groups. They recommended cultural sensitivity training for government officials and teachers, employees of the justice system, government front-line workers, and health care professionals. It was noted that this training and also language training was especially needed for individuals working in Innu and Inuit communities.

The community also recommended that all individuals who are working in service-related professions be given more information on what types of services are available for victims of violence.

Community Participation

Discussions on community participation revolved around building and renewing partnerships at the community level. This was seen as being very timely and important to the future success with the recent changes to the Rural Secretariat, Regional Health Authorities, school districts and now the regional coordinating committees.

Regional coordinating committees identified the need to be more inclusive of both vulnerable groups and other anti-violence groups and the need to ensure regional representation from rural areas as important steps to address gaps at the community level.

The community identified a need to improve the partnership, information sharing and coordination of services between other communities and regions through improving networking opportunities and enhancing methods of communication.

The community recognized that work needs to be done to prevent violence early, and suggested that this could be done by engaging young people and teaching them positive relationship skills.

The community also identified the need for mechanisms to ensure on-going consultation between the community and government.

New Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) Community Model

Groups identified that funding for the RCCs needs to be more equitably distributed among the regions given the differences in their geography and available regional supports. Clear goals and objectives were requested for the new structure to ensure RCCs can see progress and acknowledge accomplishments.

Improving Legislation, Policy, Programs and Services and Transitional Support for Women and Children Leaving Abusive Situations

The community reiterated the importance of using a “gender equity lens” in developing policy and legislation as a method to ensure new initiatives address the needs of all individuals and do not have a negative impact on an already vulnerable population. They also suggested that special measures may have to be taken to ensure that services are accessible for all individuals that may require them (for example: the availability of sign language within counseling services).

The crisis response services in the province were also a focus for community groups. They noted that services needed to be expanded to better serve remote and rural communities. Concerns were raised over crisis calls from Labrador which are routed through St. John’s police headquarters. The ability of St. John’s based staff to respond appropriately to crisis calls was questioned on the basis that these persons are not

necessarily familiar with the languages of some Labrador callers, nor do they have knowledge of the people and community landmarks. Policing in rural communities was raised as a general concern, and it was noted that some communities were experiencing a lack of policing altogether.

Legal and justice issues were raised. Focus was paid to the need for enhanced legal aid services. It was further recommended that the perspectives of regional coordinating committees and greater regional representative be incorporated into the Justice Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women.

Services and programming for offenders was another issue raised. It was suggested that more programs are needed for those currently incarcerated and a more formalized coordinated approach with Justice, Victim Services and community agencies be developed. It was suggested that creating an alternative to conditional sentencing, especially in rural communities was also needed.

Early intervention for children, youth and families, and the need for more programs for youth was a concern for the community. Additional programming for seniors was also raised. It was suggested that community workshops be held for seniors across the province to allow them to discuss financial management, physical and emotional abuse as well as healthy living.

Concerns about funding and resources were raised by community groups. They indicated a lack of resources to provide the full range of counseling required for women and children in transition. Concern was also raised over a lack of housing for women ages 32-54, especially those with special needs and those over 55 needing home support services.

Aboriginal Women and Children

The community identified the need for greater opportunities for Aboriginal women to gather in their home communities and connect with Aboriginal women in other parts of the country if they are to increase community participation in violence prevention. It was also noted that it is equally important to share information on the several successful projects and initiatives currently taking place in these communities.

The community groups also suggested improvement to services in Aboriginal communities. Funding for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder was raised as being inadequate and a significant challenge for Inuit communities, as well as funding to address family violence in Aboriginal communities, and for Aboriginal people living off reserve. Racism in Aboriginal communities was raised as a concern, and there was a call for more cultural sensitivity training for front line workers.

It was recommended that more attention be paid to successful programs in Aboriginal communities as promising approaches, and that these initiatives receive continued support. In particular, it was stressed that any violence prevention strategies should emphasize working with and supporting Aboriginal youth.

Research and Development

Stakeholders identified a need for a Provincial government-led, coordinated research effort. They recognized that baseline information needs to be established; and that social research experts will need to be involved considering the complexity of measuring outcomes. Improved data collection on victims of violence was suggested, as was conducting a victim's client service survey to identify baseline information and indicators of violence. It was noted that research is needed on the complexities of delivering services in remote and rural communities, and on the changing needs of women and children in transition.

Leadership and Accountability

The key suggestion that was made during the discussion on leadership and accountability was the need for measurable outcomes to be identified in the new violence prevention plan. Accountability, it was suggested, requires the ability to determine if we are making progress and if our initiatives are effective. Increased coordination between departments and agencies, boards and other partners was also suggested.

Increased liaison with federal departments on violence prevention was recognized as an issue that needed attention. It was suggested that community groups and the provincial government more frequently access the funding available from federal departments.

GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE – VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Government has designed a multi-faceted violence prevention initiative which over the next six years will lay a solid foundation for the long-term goal of reducing the incidence of violence in the province. This action plan, *Taking Action Against Violence*, will be the blueprint for building stronger, resilient communities with strategies and resources to stop the growth of violence and hopefully reduce violence dramatically in our province.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles direct the work of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Violence Prevention Initiative:

- People have the right to a safe and secure environment.
- Health, well-being and productivity are enhanced in a violence-free environment.
- The social and cultural roots of violence are based on inequality. While all women, children and seniors are more likely to be victims of violence, factors

such as ability, sexual orientation, economic status or ethnicity can put them at even higher risk.

- Society reinforces violence through expressions of sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, and other biased attitudes.
- Violence is a choice and is preventable. There is strong evidence that effective intervention can reduce and prevent violence.
- Prevention of violence is everyone's responsibility.
- The elimination of violence requires a comprehensive response including prevention, public education, services and enforcement of the law.
- Criminal and other acts of violence and abuse require effective consequences including punishment under the law

TARGET POPULATIONS

Target populations include: women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status. (Appendix B)

VISION

Women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status are facing less violence and live and work in communities where violence is considered unacceptable.

MISSION

By 2012 the Violence Prevention Initiative will provide leadership within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to reduce violence against vulnerable populations.

Success will be measured through evidence of enhanced leadership, coordination, accountability, increased awareness, greater community capacity, improved legislation, policy, programs and services, effective evidence-based research, gender based analysis activities and mechanisms to support special initiatives of Aboriginal governments and organizations to reduce violence in Aboriginal communities.

MANDATE

The Violence Prevention Initiative was given approval by Cabinet, July 25, 2005 to develop a six year strategic plan for violence prevention to focus on the needs of women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status.

PARTNERS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

The Violence Prevention Initiative has involvement from several government departments and agencies (Justice, Education, Human Resources, Labour and Employment, Health and Community Services and Regional Integrated Health Authorities, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, Labour Relations Agency, Rural Secretariat, and the Women's Policy Office). The work of the VPI would not be possible without the work of its community-based partners.

These partners include:

Regional Coordinating Committees

- Labradorians for Peaceful Communities,
- Grenfell Regional Anti-Violence Team,
- Western Regional Coalition to End Violence,
- Committee Against Violence Inc.,
- Eastern Region Committee Against Violence,
- Regional Coordinating Coalition Against Violence – Eastern Avalon,
- and, four new regional coordinating committees to come on stream in 2006
- Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women,
- Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre,
- Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador,
- Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador,
- Citizen's Crime Prevention Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

Roles and Responsibilities

A representative of each regional coordinating committee will form the membership of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The role of the CAC is to advise Ministers and Deputy Ministers on needs and issues related to violence prevention at the local and regional level.

The CAC will carry out its responsibilities through meeting regularly, participating in special committees and projects, collaborating with the Women's Policy Office, liaising with stakeholder provincial organizations, organizing a provincial stakeholder conference, and consulting with Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

The role of provincial organizations is to provide advice to Government on matters pertaining to issues related to their specific mandate and/or advice on issues which are provincial in scope.

Provincial organizations will provide their expertise through their involvement with special purpose committees and projects, collaborating with the Women's Policy Office, liaising with the CAC and consulting with Ministers and Deputy Ministers.

Community Stakeholders

There are also many interested stakeholders that contribute to violence prevention work and who are sought for guidance and expertise on various issues.

These include:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Health Centre
- Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
- Multicultural Women's Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Association for New Canadians
- Boys and Girls Club of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Canadian Mental Health Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- The Canadian Red Cross
- Community Youth Network
- The AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Human Rights Association of Newfoundland and Labrador
- John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Independent Living Resource Centre
- Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living
- Newfoundland Gay and Lesbians for Equality
- St. John's Native Friendship Centre
- Public Legal Information Association of Newfoundland
- Municipalities and Federal departments and agencies
- Private Sector
- Others

Aboriginal Governments and Organizations

The Violence Prevention Initiative works and consults with Aboriginal governments and organizations on violence prevention issues.

These governments and organizations include:

- Nunatsiavut Government
- Miawpukek First Nation
- Mushuau First Nation
- Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation
- Innu Nation
- Federation of Newfoundland Indians
- Labrador Metis Nation

ACTION PLAN – TAKING ACTION AGAINST VIOLENCE

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDINAL CHANGE ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Goal:

By 2012 there will be increased awareness and attitudinal change about the unacceptability of violence against vulnerable populations.

In the early years of the plan there will be an increase in public awareness about the impact of violence and the important responsibility everyone has to ensure healthy and respectful relationships. It will be especially important to target increased awareness activities about vulnerable populations such as women, children and youth, Aboriginal women and children, seniors, persons with disabilities and others who are victims of violence because of ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status. Programs will be designed to encourage new and changed behaviors, especially with children and youth.

In the short-term we hope to see an increase in public concern and awareness about violence against vulnerable populations, and an increase in the reporting of incidences of violence and requests for service. In the long-term we may be able to decrease the need for violence prevention services and improve indicators for healthier and safer relationships.

Objectives:

1. Expansion and implementation of a province-wide violence prevention public awareness and education campaign by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will implement an expanded provincial, multi-media public awareness and attitudinal change campaign with multi-sectoral partners, including community, business and industry, municipalities, and the media with a focus on identified populations of the VPI.
- The Department of Education will lead a collaborative province-wide strategy on substance abuse prevention and education.
- The Department of Education, in collaboration with the Departments of Justice and Health and Community Services will host a Youth Forum with respect to Safe and Caring Schools and Substance Abuse.
- The Department of Education will work closely with Addictions, Departments of Justice, Health and Community Services to ensure students receive substance abuse and gambling education in the curriculum.
- The Department of Justice will develop victim services and learning resources on court preparation for children.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will implement a public awareness campaign on elder abuse.

- The Department of Health and Community Services will develop a public awareness strategy concerning the identification and mandatory reporting of child maltreatment including services available to children, youth and their families.

2. Implementation of a comprehensive training program for VPI by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will continue to promote the need for the delivery of cultural sensitivity training to all relevant government entities.
- The Women's Policy Office will continue to support and coordinate the delivery of violence prevention training to public servants and community workers.
- The Department of Education will continue to train teachers on the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative.
- The Department of Education will review existing cultural sensitivity training with the view to delivering this training to teachers and staff with a priority in schools with Aboriginal children.
- The Department of Justice will revise and deliver Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's Students Taking Responsibility In Violence Education program.
- The Department of Justice will deliver training on family violence legislation.
- The Labour Relations Agency will deliver training on the Labour Standards Act.
- Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will conduct a needs analysis of cultural sensitivity training needs for provincial government employees in Labrador.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will design and deliver a train-the-trainer program on the use of conflict resolution techniques in working with families.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will develop and implement curriculum for social workers including components related to the identification and assessment of child abuse and developmental needs of children.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will continue to partner with the Department of Justice and community partners regarding training for social workers and police on collaborative investigation of child sexual abuse.

3. Consolidate and improve information on VPI programs and services by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will consolidate and publicize information on violence prevention including crisis and other services for victims and service providers in plain language and culturally appropriate formats.

- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will incorporate violence prevention messages and services into departmental public relations materials and web-sites.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will update and improve their public information on programs and services for victims of violence.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 2: INCREASING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Goal:

By 2012 VPI will have increased community participation in violence prevention together with communities and Aboriginal governments and organizations

Government cannot implement this plan to reduce violence alone. It will require the continued support and participation of the community partners of the Violence Prevention Initiative who have worked tirelessly on this issue for several decades.

The new program will strengthen relationships and partnership amongst all stakeholders. It will also provide opportunity to build capacity for planning, implementing, and evaluation of violence prevention activities. An annual conference will provide an opportunity for community and government to focus on best practices and emerging issues and opportunities to prevent violence in this province. Provincial and regional groups will be recognized for their activities associated with reducing violence in our communities. Community leaders will be enlisted to speak out against violence against women and other vulnerable populations.

Objective:

1a. Expansion of the VPI community program and stakeholder participations by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will create a Community Advisory Committee and appoint a Chair.
- The Women's Policy Office will create four new regional coordinating committees and increase grant funding for each committee from \$45,000 to \$55,000 annually.
- The Women's Policy Office will provide an additional \$20,000 annually to the Labrador Committee.

- The Women's Policy Office will provide an additional \$20,000 each to the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre.
- The Department of Education will host a provincial conference on *Safe and Caring Schools: Best Practice with respect to Substance Abuse Prevention* with participation from all departments and community partners.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will chair the subcommittee on early intervention programs for high risk youth.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will review the Youth Services Program for youth at risk of maltreatment in their family homes.
- The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment will encourage awareness and action on violence prevention through its liaison with youth serving agencies and networks.

1b.Expansion of the VPI community program and stakeholder participations by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will organize two face to face meetings of the Community Advisory Committee annually. This will include an annual meeting between the Community Advisory Committee and the VPI Deputy Ministers Committee.
- The Women's Policy Office will lead initiatives to engage municipalities and the corporate sector in violence awareness activities.
- The Community Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the Women's Policy Office, will organize annual stakeholder conferences.
- The Department of Education will continue community involvement and projects with respect to the Provincial Safe and Caring Schools Committee and the Provincial Committee for Substance Abuse Prevention and Education.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will continue to support family resource programs in the province as they provide respectful environments where families and children can experience safe and positive interactions.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will continue to support healthy baby clubs in the province in their provision of professional development in working with vulnerable populations.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will continue community involvement and projects through the Provincial Committee for Substance Abuse and Education.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3: IMPROVING LEGISLATION, POLICY, PROGRAMS, SERVICES, INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

Goal:

By 2012 all legislation, policy, programs, services, information and facilities for vulnerable populations will have been reviewed, updated and appropriate changes undertaken in cooperation with communities, Aboriginal governments and organizations and the federal government to ensure they are meeting the needs of victims of violence.

Many of the existing legislation, policies, programs and services are inadequate to meet the changing demographic and geographic needs of those affected by violence. All existing and new legislation and policies relating to violence prevention require a gender analysis to ensure that the full needs of women, the highest victim population, are understood and addressed in program design and delivery. Also, with increasing public awareness and information about violence, we will be expecting an increase in the reporting incidents of violence and a demand for early intervention services and programs for vulnerable populations and victims. Therefore it will be important to advance an improved and better-integrated support system to help victims leave violent relationships and situations. These supports range from improved access to emergency services, counseling, accommodations, and other supports.

Objectives:

1a. Improve and coordinate services to children and youth related to violence prevention by 2009

Actions:

- The Department of Education will establish a youth advisory team to the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative.
- The Department of Education will investigate the feasibility of using risk assessment tools with at-risk students.
- The Department of Education will review early intervention programs for high risk youth and their families (e.g. Strengthening Families Program).
- The Department of Education will integrate healthy relationships, anti-violence, and diversity training into curriculum.
- The Department of Education will investigate student support services for children in transition.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will review current programs for children who witness family violence.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will partner with other youth serving departments on a coordinated response to services for youth.

- The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment will investigate ways to integrate violence prevention messages and information into youth serving organizations which it funds and liaises.
- The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment will encourage the use of protocols for violence by youth serving agencies.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation will develop a violence prevention program for youth accessing its community centres.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will collaborate on a cross-departmental youth violence prevention strategy.

1b.Improve and coordinate services to children and youth related to violence prevention by 2012

Actions:

- The Department of Education will continue to implement the Safe and Caring Schools Initiative by:
 - Providing professional development for special education teachers with respect to behavior assessment.
 - Extending in-services on bullying, harassment and intimidation, and school wide positive behaviors supports.
 - Implementing the provincial Safe and Caring Schools Policy.
 - Reviewing the Safe and Caring Schools Action Plan.
 - Developing policy guidelines for district policies with respect to safe and caring schools (e.g. handling conflict, harassment and intimidation, substance use and gambling in schools).

- The Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Justice will continue to provide services to young offenders under the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will continue to promote best practices in the area of intervention and education on nonviolent responses to behaviors through educational curriculum and ongoing professional development for early childhood educators.
- Through such initiatives as Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Practices, the Department of Health and Community Services will continue to promote programming in regulated childcare facilities that support providing children with strategies on how to resolve conflict appropriately.
- The Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Justice will continue to examine assessment and intervention programs for violent young offenders.

- The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation will explore the linkage between youth homelessness and violence.

2a. Review transitional services for women and children and make recommendations for improvements by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will coordinate a process to review existing supports (counseling, housing, education and training, employment, child care, health) for women and children needing to leave abusive situations.
- The Department of Justice will implement Family Violence Legislation.
- The Department of Justice will conduct research and analysis on specialized family violence courts and develop recommendations for Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Department of Justice will continue the Minister's Committee on Violence Against Women.
- The Department of Justice will develop an information package on court procedures for shelter staff.
- The Department of Justice will make improvements to courtroom facilities and equipment to better accommodate the needs of vulnerable witnesses.
- The Department of Justice will begin implementing model court initiatives (e.g. technology, physical design, and safety).
- The Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment will review the implementation of its victims of violence policy.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will work with the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador to develop operational policies.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation will review the implementation of its victims of violence housing policy.

2b. Review transitional services for women and children and make recommendations for improvements by 2012

Actions:

- The Department of Justice will expand treatment programs for perpetrators of family violence.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation will continue to support transitional housing and long-term housing for those in need or victims of violence.

3. Conduct a review of legislation, policy and programs by target populations with a focus on prevention and early intervention and adopting a gender equity lens by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will coordinate a cross-departmental review and, where feasible, will work towards consolidation of participating departments' family violence protocols.
- The Department of Justice will improve translation and interpretative services for Aboriginal people in the justice system.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will lead a review, in conjunction with the Women's Policy Office, of the *Elder Abuse Strategy* submitted by the Seniors Resource Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will lead a review, in conjunction with partner departments, of legislation to inform a proposed comprehensive framework for long term care and supportive services for adults, especially vulnerable adults.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will incorporate issues related to violence prevention into the development of the *Healthy Aging Plan* for the province.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will consider issues related to violence prevention in the development and implementation of the *Long Term Care and Supportive Services Strategy*.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will develop a provincial implementation plan, based on the *Provincial Policy Framework for Mental Health and Addictions*, which will include consideration of issues related to violence.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will collaborate on a cross-departmental evaluation of accessibility for persons with disabilities to violence prevention and intervention programs and services.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will ensure programs and services are meeting the needs of individuals who may be victims of violence due to their ethnicity, sexual orientation, or economic status.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #4: SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Goal:

By 2012, the Violence Prevention Initiative will have established effective partnerships with Aboriginal governments and organizations and the Federal government to support Aboriginal women in their efforts to reduce violence in the lives of Aboriginal families

In the short-term we will aim to facilitate the establishment of new partnerships among Aboriginal governments and organizations, federal government partners, and the community, to advance violence prevention in Aboriginal communities.

In the long-term we will help facilitate processes led by Aboriginal communities to deal with the impact of violence and increase culturally appropriate violence prevention interventions. The Violence Prevention Initiative's activities in this area will respect the federal government's constitutional jurisdiction and fiduciary responsibility for Aboriginal peoples.

Objectives:

1. Support leadership by Aboriginal people on violence prevention by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will support Aboriginal governments and organizations in taking action on preventing violence against women and children and others in the community.
- The Women's Policy Office will advocate for Aboriginal women to sit on agencies, boards, commissions and other positions of leadership.
- The Women's Policy Office and the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will continue to support Aboriginal governments and organizations in their efforts to promote cultural activities and traditions.
- The Women's Policy Office and the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will support Aboriginal governments and organizations in their promotion of awareness of anti-violence initiatives undertaken by Aboriginal communities.
- The Women's Policy Office will support the continued development and use of culturally appropriate assessment tools and educational programs for Aboriginal children and youth.
- Under its regular granting program, the Women's Policy Office will provide grants for violence prevention projects in Aboriginal communities.
- The Women's Policy Office will increase awareness of opportunities for Aboriginal women to meet regionally, provincially and nationally through conferences and special meetings for Aboriginal women about violence prevention.
- The Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will continue to implement the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement.
- The Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will continue negotiating the Labrador Innu Land Claims Agreement and the Miawpukek First Nation Self-Government Agreement.
- The provincial government will work with Aboriginal governments and organizations and the federal government towards improving health, housing, the

justice system, and economic opportunities to advance the status of Aboriginal women.

2. Conduct needs assessment of Provincial government programs and services which may impact violence prevention and victims services for Aboriginal women and children by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will lobby for and support the need to address stereotyping and racism by updating and adjusting cultural sensitivity training for government service providers and incorporating appropriate messages in the Violence Prevention Initiative public awareness campaign.
- The Women's Policy Office and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs will support the mapping out of existing programs related to core services needed in Aboriginal communities with federal partners and Aboriginal governments and organizations.
- The Women's Policy Office will encourage the development of appropriate second stage and long-term housing models for Aboriginal women, especially in remote communities.
- The Departments of Health and Community Services, Education, Justice, and Human Resources, Labour and Employment will continue the use and development of risk assessment tools for early intervention with young couples and children.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will review and improve, where necessary, access for Aboriginal people to violence related support programs.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 5: ENHANCING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Goal:

By 2012 Government will have developed a research plan with priorities, indicators of violence, and appropriate data collection and measurement tools The existing research about key indicators of violence for vulnerable populations, measurements of success in violence prevention, and client satisfaction and attitudinal research needs to be improved. Baseline information will be improved early in the Initiative's plan in order to establish clear indicators for changes in awareness levels, satisfaction of services and overall performance measures.

Objectives:

1. Develop violence indicators to monitor progress of violence prevention activity by 2009

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will lead the development of policy and priorities on data collection and research on violence prevention.
- The Women's Policy Office will establish key indicators of success for target populations.
- The Women's Policy Office will lead a process to develop and implement client satisfaction surveys in all partner departments.

2. Increase the capacity to collect and make use of data on violence by 2012

Actions

- The Women's Policy Office will lead initiatives to undertake research with target populations to determine the effectiveness of violence prevention programs and services at the federal, provincial and regional levels in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- The Women's Policy Office will lead initiatives to increase the coordination of departmental data collection and research on violence prevention.
- The Women's Policy Office will lead the development of a provincial research agenda on violence prevention through focus groups and conferences.
- The Women's Policy Office will collaborate with research centres on family violence research in Canada.
- The Women's Policy Office will assess the need for a provincial centre for violence prevention research.
- The Women's Policy Office will ensure that client satisfaction performance measures are set.
- The Women's Policy Office will lead initiatives with other departments to research appropriate methodologies for ethical data collection related to violence experienced by Aboriginal women.
- The Department of Education will study the effectiveness of a substance abuse prevention project for high risk youth and their families.
- The Department of Health and Community Services will monitor the full implementation of the Risk Management Model in the protection of children who are in need of protective intervention.
- The Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, the Rural Secretariat and the Women's Policy Office will continue the *Building Community Knowledge* initiative to enhance community access to consolidated violence and crime statistics.

- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will improve data collection methodologies.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY # 6: IMPROVING LEADERSHIP, COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Goal:

By 2012 there will be focused leadership and accountability by government

A more focused response to the issues and potential victims of violence will be achieved by providing a leadership framework to advance violence prevention and by strengthening and expanding community partnerships.

Community knowledge and effective community-based responses will be essential to advance the issue. We can strengthen and improve how we are dealing with violence by strengthening coordination between decision makers, the community and among law enforcement agencies as well as across all levels of government. Government departments involved with the Violence Prevention Initiative will include violence prevention goals in their strategic planning documents and report annually to the public and to Cabinet on progress.

It will be important to build these relationships and engage in effective dialogue in the first three years of this plan. This will lead to improved services and approaches for a reduction in violence in Newfoundland and Labrador. Expanding our work with the business community and corporations will also be important. In urban and rural communities, small business owners to major industrial employers all need opportunities to support activities and approaches that will reduce violence in our communities.

Objectives:

1. Improved accountability within government on violence prevention by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will incorporate the requirements of government's *Transparency and Accountability Act* into the Violence Prevention Initiative's *Action Plan: Taking Action Against Violence*.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative ministers and deputy ministers will demonstrate improved leadership and accountability to Cabinet and to the community.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies and partners will identify violence prevention goals, objectives and activities in their strategic documents.

- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will report progress on an annual basis.

2. Increased partnerships with federal entities and national working groups and agencies by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will continue to have representation on the Provincial/Territorial Family Violence Initiative.
- The Women's Policy Office will ensure that effective liaison and partnerships with other jurisdictions, federal government agencies, business and industry, municipalities, and community organizations have been established.
- All Violence Prevention Initiative departments, agencies and Regional Coordinating Committees will strengthen liaison with related federal departments and agencies and national entities such as: the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada; National Crime Prevention Strategy; the Public Health Agency of Canada; Justice Canada; the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and the Provincial/Territorial Family Violence Initiative.

3. Provide provincial leadership on stopping violence by 2012

Actions:

- The Women's Policy Office will facilitate on-going collaboration between the community and departments on legislation, policy, and program development and evaluation.
- The Women's Policy Office will support projects which promote partnerships among community organizations, local government and business.
- The Women's Policy Office will increase corporate participation in the Violence Prevention Initiative.
- The Women's Policy Office will investigate the feasibility of improved emergency response mechanisms for victims of violence in rural communities.
- The Women's Policy Office will develop a sponsorship plan to garner corporate support for the Violence Prevention Initiative.
- The Women's Policy Office will ensure that gender-based analysis is incorporated into all violence prevention initiatives.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Community Consultations and Forum Summary Report – February 2005

Comments received regarding the former VPI structure

The successes and best practices were highlighted in the following areas:

- Integrated collaborative approach which creates shared ownership, community and government participation, and respectful relationships;
- Successful networking at the regional and provincial levels;
- Structure and process of Violence Prevention Initiative supported by a dedicated government mandate, gender inclusive analysis, and the Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) structure which enables responses to unique regional differences;
- Committed resources for the regional coordinator positions who play a critical coordination role in leveraging resources and capabilities of RCC members;
- Development, implementation and sharing of education, awareness, and prevention resources and materials, both regionally and provincially; and
- There is a growing acceptance among the general public that violence is an economic and social issue.

In addition, a number of key gaps and needs were reinforced, including:

- Insufficient financial and human resources both at the central VPI and for RCCs;
- Lack of strong leadership, commitment and support of the VPI at Ministerial and senior government official levels;
- Insufficient government support at all levels, including in government agencies and boards (e.g., education boards);
- Need for increased collaboration between government and community;
- Need for additional education, awareness and prevention initiatives, especially in rural and coastal areas;
- Need for additional intervention resources as well as acknowledgement of the interrelationship between education, awareness and intervention;
- Need for policy and legislative changes to support VPI initiatives and for greater coordination of policy and program development and implementation among government departments;
- Need for realistic accountability mechanisms for community-based organizations;
- Need to leverage existing research and information in community-based organizations and to fill gaps with additional research;
- Need for violence prevention initiatives and accountabilities to be embedded in the strategic plans of government departments; and
- Need for a VPI strategic plan to support a longer term focus and work plan, both provincially and regionally.

Stakeholder Recommendations for a Future VPI

Stakeholders made a number of recommendations regarding the structure, process and focus of a future VPI. The main themes of recommendations are as follows:

Structure

- Affirm VPI as a permanent government program, supported by increased and stable long term funding (a minimum of five years);
- Continue to coordinate the VPI through the Women's Policy Office, with the same organizational structure, but with revised membership and selection criteria for the PCC;
- Boost government accountability through incorporation of violence prevention initiatives within departmental strategic plans, through allocation of a full-time position responsible for violence prevention within each partner department, and through greater integration of policies and programs;
- Protect the autonomy of RCCs to develop their own focus and work plans based upon identified regional needs;
- Demonstrate stronger Ministerial and senior government official leadership and support for VPI; and
- Maintain the RCCs within the broader community to reinforce community ownership of violence prevention issues.

Process

- Ensure a future VPI is developed in conjunction with organizations who have a longstanding record of working on violence and equity issues;
- Ensure a gender inclusive analysis forms the basis of violence prevention work;
- Focus on accountability through both qualitative and quantitative measures;
- Ensure the VPI continues to have as its foundation values, objectives, coordination and leadership, research and policy development, public awareness and education, and training and advocacy;
- Develop and implement a communications strategy;
- Build upon existing VPI successes and best practices through their documentation and sharing with stakeholders;
- Ensure processes are in place to be inclusive of all vulnerable populations;
- Develop a strategic plan to support VPI work;
- Respect cultural relevance, the role of the women's movement in violence prevention, and the needs of women, families and children;
- Provide an annual forum for stakeholders to come together; and
- Continue to build upon the collaboration which occurs between government and community organizations.

Focus

- Continue to focus on public education that emphasizes prevention, awareness and intervention, and VAAT;
- Use an inclusion lens as a basis for fostering an understanding of violence issues;
- Target certain groups such as community leaders, government personnel, and community professionals;
- Ensure accountability and continued evaluation throughout all levels, but with an emphasis on government accountability;
- Continue to develop regional priorities based upon RCC identification of regional needs;
- Undertake legislative review to more adequately address issues of violence; and

- Recognize the important integration of violence prevention and intervention work that occurs in the community, such as through transition houses and shelters.

TARGET POPULATIONS BACKGROUND

The new program has specific prevention and early intervention strategies for the following vulnerable populations:

Women

Women continue to make up the majority of victims of violence. Ensuring that services and supports exist for women leaving abusive situations remains a focus of the government's Violence Prevention Initiative. We still face significant challenges in trying to provide adequate supports for women to feel comfortable leaving violence. To address this, the Women's Policy Office will be conducting research to identify gaps in transitional supports for women and recommending appropriate models for urban, rural, and isolated communities.

The Department of Justice will also play a key role in making changes to the justice system to provide better supports for women experiencing family violence. In addition to implementing the new Family Violence Legislation, the department will begin researching family violence specialized courts.

Children

According to 122 police services, in 2003, children and youth under the age of 18 accounted for 21% of victims of physical assault and 61% of victims of sexual assault, while representing 21% of the population. (Statistics Canada 2005)

According to the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2003, approximately 103,300 child maltreatment cases were substantiated in Canada in 2003 for physical and sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment. More of the cases of physical and sexual abuse were in older children, and more exposure to domestic violence was in younger children.

The rate of substantiated maltreatment increased by 125%, from 9.64 cases of substantiated maltreatment per 1,000 in 1998 to 21.71 cases per 1,000 in 2003. The most important factor noted for driving the increase is the dramatic increase in cases of exposure to domestic violence and emotional maltreatment. The study's authors said that these increases "may be explained by improved and expanded reporting and investigation procedures, including: changes in case substantiation practices, more systematic identification of victimized siblings, and greater awareness of emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence." (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005)

To ensure prevention and early intervention, programs and services which focus on children are crucial. By identifying violence earlier and giving children the essential skills to address abuse and violence, the escalation of violence can be prevented.

Programs in the new Violence Prevention Initiative will focus on providing early intervention programs for high-risk youth and families. Risk assessment tools will be used in schools, and family programs in the education system will be strengthened.

Youth

Early intervention programs to help youth develop healthy relationship skills are another important measure in the new violence prevention program. A cross-departmental violence prevention youth strategy will be established to maximize the efforts of several youth-focused programs and services.

The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary's Students Taking Responsibility in Violence Education (STRIVE) program will be updated and increased collaboration with other community programs aimed at youth will take place.

Bullying, harassment and intimidation is one issue currently being addressed by the Department of Education. An in-service for teachers on this topic will be extended to ensure teachers have the tools necessary to react quickly and effectively to bullying situations in our schools.

Aboriginal Women and Children

In 2003 Aboriginal people were three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than were those who are non-Aboriginal. In addition, 54% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing severe and potentially life threatening violence compared to 37% of non-Aboriginal women. (Statistics Canada, 2005) The action plan of the Violence Prevention Initiative includes a number of initiatives to be conducted in partnership with the Aboriginal governments and organizations, federal partners and with the Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Aboriginal leaders have been very clear that community-based programs work best to address the complex needs of this population. With this in mind, all departments involved will take a community-driven approach to programs and services. An Aboriginal women's committee will be established to advise the Premier and Ministers on issues of importance.

Under its regular granting program, the Women's Policy Office will provide grants for violence prevention projects in Aboriginal communities.

A comprehensive review of the services required for women and children in transition will focus separately on what services are needed for Aboriginal women and children. In addition, the Department of Justice will begin work to improve translation services for Aboriginal people in the Justice system.

Seniors

Seniors are the fastest growing population in North America and violence and abuse against seniors remains to be an issue. Reported less often than child abuse or family violence, awareness around senior abuse is very important. As part of the Violence Prevention Initiative's public awareness campaign, government will send a message that violence against seniors is unacceptable. Awareness around indicators of abuse will also be raised in this campaign to ensure that seniors know when they are being abused physically, psychologically and financially.

Persons with Disabilities

It is estimated that persons with disabilities are approximately one and one half times more likely to encounter violence against themselves than the population at large. (Roeher Institute, 1995) These persons face countless challenges in reporting violence and accessing existing intervention services. Violence Prevention Initiative departments and agencies will evaluate services and take measures to improve services for persons with disabilities.

Persons who are victims due to race, sexual orientation, ethnicity or economic status

It is estimated that there are approximately 60,000 hate crimes committed annually in Canada's nine major urban centres. Sixty-one percent are directed against racial minorities, 23% against religious minorities, 11% against groups of different sexual orientation, and 5% against ethnic minorities. (Canadian Heritage Multiculturalism, 2001). Newfoundland and Labrador is growing in diversity. The Violence Prevention Initiative will promote diversity and include anti-racism and anti-sexism messages in its public awareness campaigns. Encouraging diversity and acceptance is another important aspect of violence prevention. A review of existing cultural sensitivity training will take place and diversity inclusive education will receive new support.